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Jehovah told Noah to come  
forth from the Ark









# THROUGH THE BIBLE

BY

THEODORA WILSON WILSON

With an Introductory Chapter by

JAMES MORE

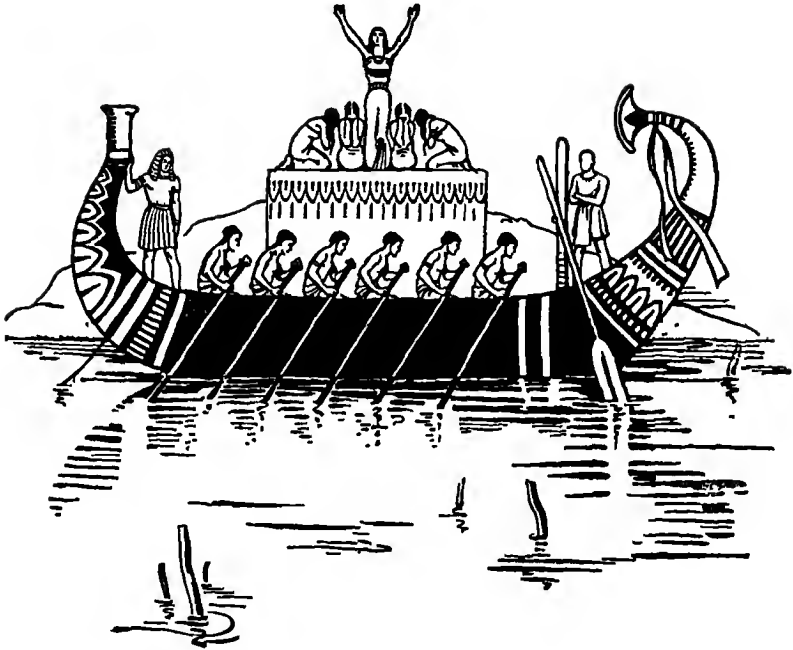
Illustrated by

C·E and H·M·BROCK and  
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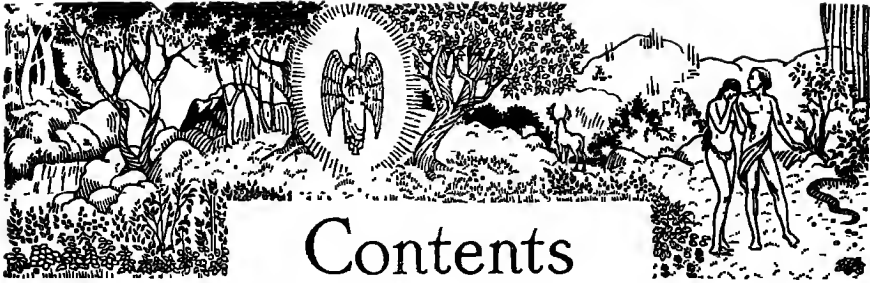
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**TO**  
**MY OWN NEPHEWS AND NIECES,**  
**AND TO ALL ADVENTUROUS BOYS AND GIRLS EVERYWHERE**





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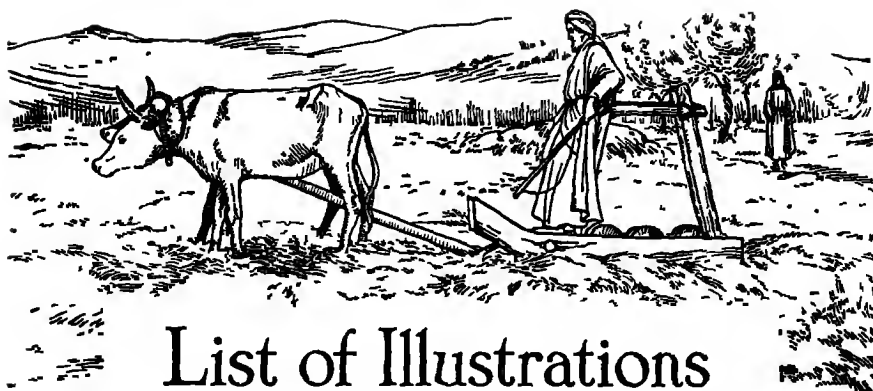
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*By* H. M. BROCK, R.I.

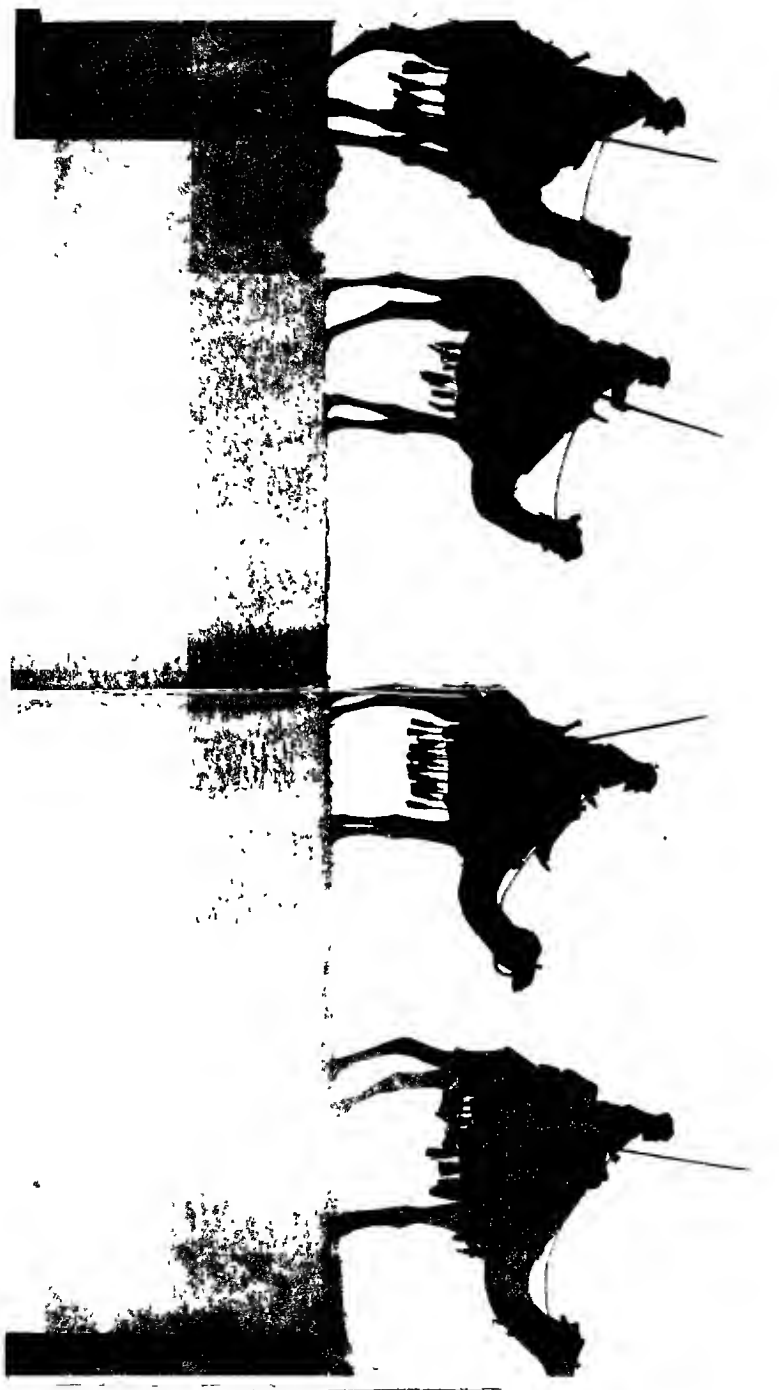
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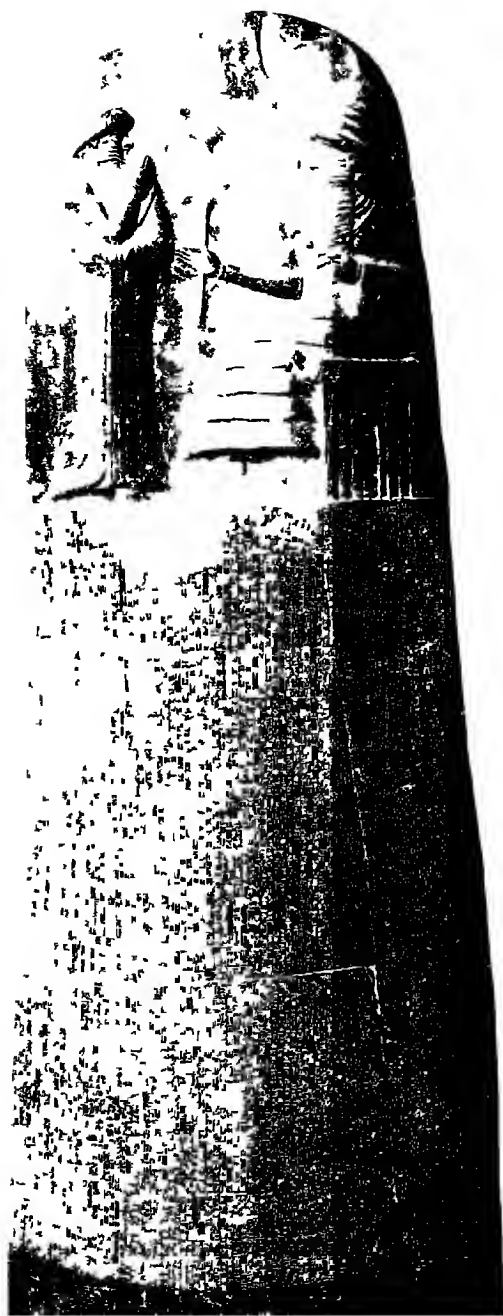


"Abram had married the Princess Sarai"  
—a sculptured head wearing the actual  
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“He noticed clear against the  
sky the outlines of camels.”





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# HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO US

*by*

JAMES MORE

In the beginning God

Gen. i., 1.

THESE four words introduce the wonderful and familiar story of the creation of the world. They should be written in letters of gold, for the beginning *was* God; before there *was* any form of creation there *was* God. And when He had created man and woman He slowly unfolded to them, by the Divine Spirit, His great love for them, and His power to guide them in the way of life. This revelation of Himself, given to His prophets and chosen people, was written down for the guidance of His children. That is our Bible.

It was God who made the Bible of the Jews, which they call the Old Testament, preparing the way for the fulfilment of His promise to send His Son into the world. It was God who made the New Testament, revealing to mankind how He "so loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son."

In it is to be found God's revelation of Himself to man, and man's relation to God. It has surmounted the shocks of time, because it is true to life and satisfies the deepest yearnings of the human heart.

The story of our Bible is a tale of a great adventure. Although it was first completed nearly 1900 years ago it is still the key to life and the greatest book the world has ever known. The history of its transmission through the centuries is fascinating ; it reveals the guiding hand of God in its path through many languages and versions, maintaining its spiritual power untouched.

## HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO US

To-day the Bible is at the very centre of our national life. Our Coronation service is essentially a great religious ceremony and one of the chief ordinances is The Presenting of the Holy Bible.

The Archbishop says these words:

"Our Gracious King; we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is wisdom; this is the royal Law; these are the lively oracles of God."

To tell the full story of the Bible itself from the earliest days of its formation to the present time is not possible within the scope of this introduction, but a brief sketch of the main features will tell us many things that will help us to treasure this greatest of all books.

On the title pages of the modern English Versions of our Bibles, it is stated that these books are "Translated out of the original tongues and with the former translations diligently compared and revised." What were these "original tongues" and "former translations" and how have they been translated for us in the Bibles we use to-day?

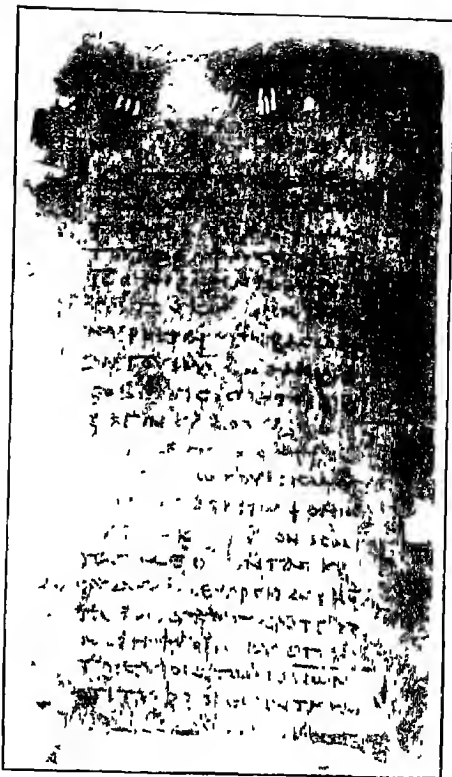
## THE OLD TESTAMENT

It is generally agreed that the Books of the Bible which we call the Old Testament (except a few written in Aramaic) were originally written in Hebrew, but as printing was not invented until A.D. 1454 we have to picture our early Bible in quite a different form from modern editions. It is not known when the first Hebrew Collections of Sacred Writings were made, but one of the earliest references to the Books of the Law is in Deuteronomy xxviii. 61, and we find in Joshua viii. 32 that "he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses."

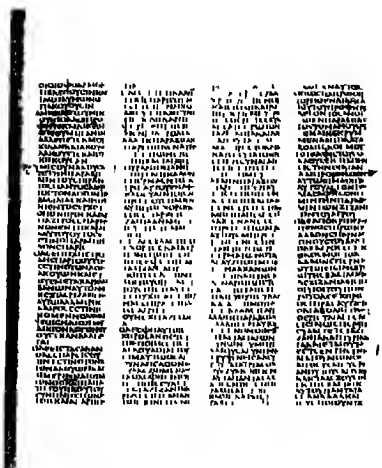
This could not have been in writing as we now know it and we have therefore to thank the discoveries made by famous archaeologists among the ruins of the ancient cities of Assyria for enlightening us. It has been proved by the discovery of great numbers of tablets made of baked clay that this form of keeping historical records was in existence even before Abraham left Ur



The Bilingual story of the Creation--written out about 600 B C



A page of papyrus, giving the Logia, or sayings of Jesus.



The Codex Sinaiticus.





## HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO US

of the Chaldees for the country we now call Mesopotamia. It is reasonable therefore to believe that the earliest of our Books of the Bible would be written on these tablets of baked clay.

The Hebrew language is a branch of the great Semitic (or Children of Shem) family of languages which were spoken by peoples of Babylonia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Syria. Probably the writing was in Cuneiform, the wedge-shaped characters which were widely known throughout the whole of Palestine.

In the year A D. 1887, the discovery of the famous Tel-el Amarna tablets in Egypt greatly increased our understanding of our earliest Biblical writings. These tablets, with wedge-shaped letters, date back to the time of Joshua. On the next stage we can throw very little light but we must remember that in the earliest days our Bible consisted only of the first five books which we describe as the Pentateuch (Greek, *pente* five, and *teuchos* book). To the Jews these five books have always been their "Bible." No other books were ever held so sacred by them.

Egypt, since the early days when Abraham went down to it, has always played a vital part in our Bible history, and we owe a great debt to it for its help in the preservation of the Scriptures. It was in Egypt that use was first made of papyrus rolls. This material, resembling paper in many ways, was prepared from the fibres of the papyrus plant grown in the area of the River Nile. The fibres were laid in two layers running horizontally and perpendicularly. After moistening and treatment with a preparation of glue the layers were put under pressure to make sheets. It was a simple matter to attach a number of these sheets together to form a roll.

We read in Isaiah viii. 1, that the Lord spoke unto Isaiah: "Take thee a great roll and write," and in Jeremiah xxxvi. 2, the word of God came unto Jeremiah: "Take thee a roll of a book and write therein." It cannot be said definitely whether these rolls would be made from papyrus or from prepared skins of sheep or goats, but it is possible that both methods were used at that time.

A roll was made up with a stick at each end and could be unrolled from one and rolled round the other as the reading

## HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO US

proceeded. It was in this form that the Hebrew Scriptures came into common use from that period, and continued until about the end of the third century after the birth of our Lord. Then the use of vellum or parchment for manuscripts became general throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. This material, prepared from the skins of goats, sheep, or other animals, was found to be more durable than papyrus.

It is impossible to say when all the books of the Old Testament were written, but it is generally agreed that the structure as we have it to-day can be dated back to between the eighth and second centuries before Christ. In its final form, the date given by most modern critics is 120 B. C.

Broadly speaking, the Books of our old Testament were first of all written in Hebrew and, as printing was not invented, we must remember that all copies of the Scriptures had to be written by hand. The earliest copies, therefore, we describe as Manuscripts (Latin: *Manus*, hand; and *scribere* pp. *scriptus*, to write). In the making of these manuscripts, during the centuries before printing, errors would certainly creep in and the differences of meaning in many of the passages of the Bible to-day are largely due to this fact.

One would naturally assume that the oldest manuscripts in existence would be of the Old rather than of the New Testament but actually this is not so. The oldest Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament we possess cannot be dated earlier than the ninth century after Christ. There is, therefore, an interval of about a thousand years between the writing of the last book of the Old Testament and the date of our oldest manuscripts in Hebrew.

What happened during this important period? The most decisive event in Jewish history occurred in A.D. 70 when, after the Romans under Titus destroyed Jerusalem, great numbers of the Jews were driven from the Holy Land and scattered over the world. So great a veneration had the Jew for the sacred writings of his race that, faced with pagan religions and the rising tide of the new Christian faith, he, of necessity, built his whole moral and spiritual life round his sacred books. Effort was made to preserve the purity of the Scriptures and very rigid laws were

## HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO US

enforced for the copying of the manuscripts. Old manuscripts, which had become torn, were destroyed by fire as soon as they could be replaced by new copies. It cannot be doubted, therefore, that during this long interval of a thousand years scrupulous fidelity to the written word of the originals was fully upheld.

About the year A.D. 100 a synod of the Jews fixed the list of accepted books in the Old Testament as we have it in our Bibles to-day. The Apocrypha (meaning "hidden" or "secret"), a number of books of sacred writings which had previously been recognised as almost equally inspired as the other books, was omitted. Until about a century ago the Apocrypha was included in all English Bibles.

Let us now turn to our manuscripts in Greek. As early as 300 B.C. the Jews were spreading all over the Eastern countries. They were losing their native Hebrew language by constant intercourse with the Greek speaking peoples and there was a growing need for Greek translations of the Scriptures. In Jerusalem itself, Hebrew had ceased to be the language of the people and the reading of the sacred books had to be interpreted by the Rabbis or Scribes into Aramaic, which was the language spoken by the Jewish people during the time of our Lord.

Egypt again plays its part in our story, for it was in the great city of Alexandria that the famous Septuagint translation in Greek was made. A special reason existed for this version (the name is derived from the Latin word meaning Seventy) being translated in Alexandria, for this city was a great centre of Greek learning and had a famous library. Large numbers of Jews had lived in Egypt for centuries before this time and it is recorded that Alexander the Great, when he founded the city and called it by his own name, gave special recognition to the Jews by allowing them the privileges of citizenship and permission to celebrate the rites of their own faith.

It has been said that the idea of creating this Greek translation of the Old Testament was the outcome of a suggestion from the royal librarian at the building of the great library. To further this an embassy was sent to the High Priest at Jerusalem with the request that he should send to Alexandria six elders from each of the twelve tribes of Israel with copies of the Hebrew Law to make

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the Greek Translation for the University. Another version of the story is that the number of elders was seventy, that each one worked independently in a separate room, and that when the work of translation was completed and compared it was found that, word for word each copy was alike.

For various reasons these stories may be doubted, but they have been quoted by many of the earliest Christian writers, probably as an assurance that this version was properly authorised and that it was faithful to the original Hebrew text.

It was from this translation that the great Codex Sinaiticus was made, now one of the greatest literary treasures in the British Museum. This famous manuscript was discovered in 1844 by a great German scholar, Dr. Tischendorf, among a pile of old parchments in a convent at the foot of Mount Sinai. Other famous manuscripts are the Codex Alexandrinus, which is also in the British Museum and the Codex Vaticanus, which is in the Vatican Library in Rome, both of which were written about the fourth century A.D. (The word Codex is from the Greek, meaning "a manuscript arranged in book form.") Here we find the first stage in the transition of our Bible from the Hebrew roll to the earliest approach to our modern style of book.

Early in our story we spoke of the discoveries of clay tablets in Mesopotamia. In Egypt, during the last 50 years many wonderful treasures of papyrus manuscripts have been unearthed; the greatest of these, found in 1930, being what is now called the Chester-Beatty papyri. Egypt with its dry soil has preserved this treasure in its sands for 1800 years. In any country with a damp climate such ancient papyri could not have survived the ravages of time. The Chester-Beatty papyri of the Old Testament in Greek, may be dated as early as A.D. 150. The value of this great discovery is beyond estimation and it is possible that still greater treasures of its kind may yet be revealed to us.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

While it is generally agreed that the books of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew, it is believed that the New Testament was first written in Greek.

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After the martyrdom of Stephen, the followers of Christ suffered great persecution. In consequence they fled in large numbers from Jerusalem and were scattered abroad throughout Judea, Samaria, and afterwards farther afield. Full of the Gospel they made many converts in the regions in which they settled. But there was at the same time a great conflict of views between many of the disciples. We remember with what difficulty St. Peter was won over to the new idea that God's message through Jesus Christ was not for the Jews alone but that His teaching was to be a universal religion.

From Jerusalem the Gospel was carried by the disciples to Antioch in Syria, and this place became the headquarters of the missionary journeys which took Paul to Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece, and eventually to Rome. In Antioch, Jews, Greeks, Romans and oriental races mingled. It was a great trading centre, with Greek the language of all commercial intercourse, and while Aramaic was their spoken language the disciples would know Greek also. At this eventful period of the world's history it seems the working of Providence that when the Gospels were first written the language should have been one that was in international use.

But it was thirty or forty years after the death of Christ before the first books of our New Testament were written. The spread of Christianity in the early years of the Church was not due to the influence of sacred writings but to the preaching and testimony of men and women who had experienced the new life in Jesus Christ. The good news of the Kingdom was spread abroad by word of mouth or what is usually called the oral tradition. These disciples did not at first think of writing books, because they lived in the hope that Jesus would return to this earth during their lifetime.

Had He not said: "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power."—Mark ix. 1.

Surely that must mean nothing less than the end of the present world and the establishment of Christ's Kingdom in their own lifetime. What, then, was the use of writing books for the future? So they gathered together in their weekly meeting places

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to hear the Old Testament Scriptures and perhaps to listen to a disciple who had actually seen and heard the Lord. Year by year the word-of-mouth teaching went on—until they gradually realised that the end was not to be yet.

The numbers, still living, of those who had been eye witnesses of the ministry of Christ had rapidly diminished and soon there would be none left. James, the son of Zebedee, for his loyalty to Christ had suffered a martyr's death; others lived continually in peril of their lives. The story of St. Paul during his missionary journeys reveals in dramatic language the great dangers that ever confronted the disciples. It was clear that the first-hand testimony of these men must be collected and put into writing or the true story of Christ and his teaching might be forgotten. Under such conditions therefore were the Gospels written. It was not until about A.D. 60-68 that Mark wrote his gospel as it had been described to him by St. Peter, and it is probable that *Matthew* and *Luke* were completed by the year A.D. 75. St. John's Gospel was not in use before A.D. 100. The Epistles of St. Paul were, of course, written during his lifetime.

The originals of all these books must have perished in the early days of the Christian Church. When one realises that every copy had to be written on papyrus by hand, with scrupulous care, it is possible to understand how slowly these Scriptures must have circulated throughout the Churches. The work was expensive. Many of the early Christians were poor, and would find it very difficult to gather sufficient money to pay for such valuable books. But during the first three centuries, despite the great persecutions of the followers of Christ, large numbers of the books must have been copied, and, to meet the needs of brethren of other lands, translated into Latin, Syriac and Coptic. The history of Christianity during these early centuries reveals an amazing story of the wonderful growth of the Church. Fired by an unquenchable faith in the love of the risen Christ these early Christians carried the message of the Gospel into pagan lands and gave their lives in countless numbers to overcome the powers of darkness.

In the earlier part of the fourth century the Emperor Constantine became a convert to Christianity and established it as the official religion of the great Roman Empire. The persecutions

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thenceforth ceased, and with such powerful authority on the side of the Church, great progress was made in making copies of the New Testament to meet the needs of the new Churches that were rapidly springing up. Thousands of converts were brought over to the Christian faith throughout the Roman Empire in Europe and Africa, as well as in Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor. But many versions of the Scriptures had been put in circulation during the four centuries, and it had been difficult for the leaders of the Church to guard and check the accuracy of the copyists in working from the original text. From the time of Constantine all danger of further errors practically ceased, but it was found that so many mistakes had already appeared in the Old Latin versions that there was an urgent need of a revision.

St. Jerome, at one time a monk in Bethlehem, and one of the greatest scholars of his age, was appointed to undertake this great task. He completed the New Testament revision in A.D. 385 and followed on with his translations of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew

This translation, known as the Vulgate, has had a greater influence on the history of your Bible than any other book. For over a thousand years it was the foundation of almost every version issued in Western Europe, and in our own Authorised Version (the Bible we use to-day) its influence can be easily traced. For several centuries it was severely attacked by the Christians of that period who held fast to their old Bibles as being the correct reading, but it has outlived all this criticism and remains to-day the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. During succeeding centuries it was used all over Western Europe, and until the invention of printing it was copied and spread abroad by every school and monastery.

Throughout this period the Bible had been circulating in Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Armenian. In the days of the great Roman Empire its legionaries brought the Latin language to the shores of North Africa, Spain and Britain, so that when Christianity was accepted as the official religion of the State the missionaries carried with them the Latin Bible. Their language was the language of commerce among the different nations as it also became the spoken and written language of all the great centres of learning in the middle ages.

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### THE BIBLE IN ENGLAND

Christianity first reached the shores of Britain in the early part of the second century, and although it was temporarily eclipsed during the invasion of the heathen Teutons in the middle of the fifth century, it had become fully established among the Celts who received it during the Roman occupation. The conversion of the Northern Picts was early accomplished by the Celtic Churchmen, and about A.D. 397 St. Ninian founded a church at Whithorn. But the conversion of the Teutons was not made until Augustine came at the beginning of the seventh century. As the Celtic Church was established before Jerome made his translation of the Vulgate, it was therefore the old Latin Bible that was read in the Churches. After the coming of Augustine the supremacy of the Roman Church was established and the Vulgate became the accepted Bible.

Still, the people did not have the Bible in their own tongue, and although parts of it, especially the Gospels and Psalter, were translated into Anglo-Saxon for the benefit of the less educated clergy, it was a long time before it was considered desirable to translate the Bible into the language of the people. This does not seem strange when we consider that the people could not have read their own version even if they had possessed one, and only the very rich could have afforded to own a manuscript copy.

The history of the English Bible falls naturally into two periods:

1. The age of Manuscript.
2. The age of Printing.

The story of the earliest English manuscripts is linked with the name of Caedmon (died A.D. 676), a monk of the Abbey of Whitby, who translated Metrical paraphrases of parts of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon. He was followed by the Venerable Bede (A.D. 672-735) at the monastery of Jarrow, on the River Tyne. One of the most fascinating characters of the early English Church, Bede was a great scholar, teacher and saint, and more than any other man he had made Northumbria the literary centre of Western Europe. It is uncertain how much of the Bible he trans-



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lated, but we know that the Gospel of John was the last task of his life. As he lay dying he was dictating the end of the Gospel to a youthful scribe. Towards evening, the boy at the bedside said:



From an Anglo-Saxon Gospel.

"There is yet one sentence unwritten, dear master." "Write it quickly," replied Bede. After a few moments the boy told him all was finished. "You speak truth," said Bede, "all is finished now." These were the last words of this venerable saint as he peacefully passed to his rest.

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None of Bede's English work has been handed down to us but there is no doubt that many of his literary treasures were lost when the Danes laid waste the Northumbrian country during their invasion.

When Alfred the Great (A.D. 849-901) gave so much of his reign to the revival of learning, the religious life of his country was nearly extinct.

He prefixed an Anglo-Saxon translation of the Ten Commandments to his Book of Laws with portions of the Book of Exodus, but his death interrupted a version of the Psalms on which he was engaged. Scholar and patriot, Alfred saw very clearly that of all books the Bible would most surely lay the foundations of the literature of his people and it was his great ambition, therefore, that the Bible should be given to them in their own tongue.

After Alfred there followed an Anglo-Saxon translation, in beautiful language and style, of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Kings, Esther, Job, etc., by Aelfric, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in A.D. 966.

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, considerable portions of the Bible were translated, chiefly in Metrical form. One part, a paraphrase of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, was made by a monk named Orm or Ormin.

The earliest rendering of any book of Scripture into English prose, was a translation of the book of Psalms by William of Shoreham, about 1327. The next prose translation was also a version of the Psalms by Richard Rolle of Hampole, near Doncaster (died 1349). In all these versions the translations were made from the Vulgate.

The Norman Conquest, with its prolonged conflict between the Anglo-Saxon and Norman-French, affected English scholarship very much, and as a result there comes a long pause in the history of Bible translations. The clergy were replaced by priests from Normandy, who showed scant favour for any Saxon manuscripts. For almost three centuries French was the language of educated persons and the upper classes. The Norman clergy had little sympathy with any desire to spread the knowledge of the Scriptures among the common people, so that we find the Bible almost a sealed book during this long period. But it must not be

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thought that this time of waiting was wasted. Instead, a gradual change was coming over the language of the people, and out of the conflict of the two tongues and the fusion of the two races there emerged a language which became the English of Wycliffe and Chaucer. The day was drawing near when a translation of the whole Bible, of permanent value, could be made. Even in its imperfect form at that time the Scriptures had laid hold of the hearts of the people for many years before Wycliffe was born. The Church in England was passing through a critical period in its history, for it was an age mainly of ignorance and superstition. A hostile spirit against the attempts of the Pope in Rome to interfere with the liberties of the Church in England was growing throughout the nation and creating a strong feeling of independence. Education was also rapidly increasing with the opening of new schools and colleges. It is not surprising to find John Wycliffe among the leaders of this agitation against the power of Rome. A great scholar and preacher, he had a commanding influence among the poorer clergy as well as the populace, and for a long time he had been spreading the teaching of the Gospel throughout the country with the help of his "poor preachers." He was a great lover of the Bible, it was his constant companion and guide, and he desired nothing more than to give it to his countrymen in their own tongue. Wycliffe made his version from the Latin Vulgate in 1382, aided by his friend Nicholas de Hereford who translated a large part of the Old Testament. One serious defect of his translation is that it was not made from the original Hebrew and Greek. But, its value was very great; it created a vigorous impulse to sacred study and it had a powerful influence on the spiritual life of the nation. Yet Wycliffe's great life-work was not favourably received by the leading Churchmen of his day. He had to face severe opposition on the plea that he had made the Bible "common." His enemies were many and powerful, the King, the Pope and the higher clergy were against him and he had to face his trial at Blackfriars, when his teaching was condemned and he himself was excommunicated.

Four years after his death a revision was made by John Purvey, one of his beloved followers.

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### THE AGE OF PRINTING

With Purvey's revision in 1388 we come to the end of the history of the manuscript Bible. For long centuries men had laboriously copied out letter by letter the pages of the sacred Scriptures; now the dawn of a new era in Europe was beginning. Two events of great international importance occurred at almost the same time which transformed the whole histories of nations as well as the history of the Bible. First, the revival of learning (the Renaissance) came, mainly owing to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, in 1454, which drove large numbers of Greek scholars to Western Europe. It set in motion a great movement for the study of the classics and an awakening of the need for fuller knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. In the second place there came the invention of printing from movable type, in the same year. We do not know who was the first man in Europe to think of making each letter in relief on a separate piece of metal. Several countries claim this honour for their sons. Without doubt, however, a German, Johann Gutenberg, in the city of Mainz, has the best claims to this distinction. The time was ripe for such a great discovery and few inventions in the history of mankind have brought so many treasures to the human race; for printing became allied to the great revival of learning.

The first types they cut were probably from hard wood, just as wood is still used to-day for very large type. Afterwards moulds were made which could be filled in with melted lead. When this had hardened and cooled into the form of a letter it became the finished piece of movable type.

Living in such an age, it was, naturally, Gutenberg's great ambition to print the Bible. With such primitive type it was a tremendous undertaking, and a task that involved great patience; but even so the process was speed itself in comparison with the laborious efforts of the manuscript copyist. Just as we have marvelled at some of the inventions of our own time, so this work of printing must have appeared to the people of Gutenberg's day, for the printers did not disclose how the work was done, and tried to make every letter and illustration appear as if it had actually been done by hand.

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The first book issued from the Mainz press is known as the Mazarin Bible. It first appeared in 1456, and as only a few copies are in existence, they are among the most precious things in the world to-day. From Mainz the new art quickly spread throughout Europe and it was brought to England by William Caxton, in 1476. But in these early days it would have been dangerous for any man to print the Bible in England, so Caxton, our first printer, saved himself from censure by translating from the Latin the popular *Golden Legend*, and printing this volume with the addition of many Bible stories. It was in the year, 1483, that this, the first printing in English of any portion of the Bible, was issued.

In 1484, a century after Wycliffe's death, William Tyndale was born, in a quiet little village in Gloucestershire. He was educated at Oxford and Cambridge and it is likely that he came under the influence of the renowned scholar Erasmus, who had produced his famous Greek New Testament in 1516. There is no doubt that this book was a great inspiration to Tyndale and gave him the idea of making an English translation from the original tongues. In his own words to a learned divine: "If God spares me I will one day make the boy that drives the plough in England to know more of the Scriptures than thou doest."

But he lived in troubled times in the history of the Church. A decree had been issued forbidding any person to undertake the translation of the Bible without authority, and Tyndale knew that without the sanction of the Church no one would dare to print his translations of the new Testament. With cheerful heart therefore, he became an exile, and in poverty and distress, and often in great danger, he worked at his translation in Hamburg. In the year 1525 we find him in the city of Cologne engaged in the printing of his New Testament. But persecution followed, and he had hurriedly to make his escape to Worms where the following year the work was completed. With great secrecy his Testaments were smuggled into England and in a few years scattered throughout the whole country. Vigorous measures were taken by the leaders of the Church to suppress the books. Every port was watched and thousands of copies were seized and burned. But as time went on it was found that the tide of public opinion was running too strongly in favour of this book to keep it from the people. Yet it

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was not until after Tyndale had suffered the death of a martyr that the door was opened. In 1536, he was burned at the stake in Germany, with a last prayer on his lips, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." A year after his death a Bible was published containing the translations of all the Books from Genesis to Second Chronicles. We owe a great debt to Tyndale for the spirit of his translation; the simple, sublime and pure language of our beloved Authorised Bible is in a large measure due to it. In all the story of the Reformation in England there is no name that bears more honours than William Tyndale's.

We shall see how soon his prayer was answered. As the Reformation advanced, the demand for a Bible in English became increasingly more urgent. The questions at issue between the Church and the Protestants must, it was felt, be finally decided by God's Word as revealed in the Bible itself. The Church, in its teaching, its authority and government, must be judged by the Scriptures on which it was founded. Besides Tyndale, other men were engaged on the work of translation and chief among these was Miles Coverdale (born 1488). He, at an early age, supported the Reformation and was forced to leave the country in peril of his life. In

S. Mathew.

Jo. ij.

### The Seconde Chapter.

**W**hen Jesus was borne in bethlehem a town of iury/in the tyme of kynge Herode/bethelde/there cam\* wyse men fro the este to Jerusalem sayinge: where is he that is borne kynge of the iewes? we have sene his starre in the este/and are come to worshipp hym.

¶ Herode the kynge/after he hadde herde this /was troubled/and all Jerusalem with hym /and he sent for all the chief prestes and scribes of the people/and demaunded of them where Christ shulde be borne. They sayde unto him: in bethlehem a town of iury. For thus is it writen by the prophet:

Mich. v. And thou bethlehem in the lode of iury/shalt not be the least as perteynyng to the prynces of iuda. For out of the shall come a captayne / whych shall govern my people israhel.

¶ Then Herod prevely called the wyse men /and diligently

knew her after /warde/but hit is the maner of the scripture so to speake / as ge. viij. c. the ravin rain not agayne till the water was dycke ype and the erth drye/the scripture meanerly not /he cam agayne after warde: evyn so here/hit foloweth not that ioseph & we oure lady als her warde.

\* wyse men.  
Of mathew they ar callid Magi / 2 in certeyne countreis i the est/ phyl losophers conyns

Tyndale's New Testament (A D 1534)—Matt 2, 1-7

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1535, he published our earliest complete Bible in English. Although it is not known where the Bible was printed it is believed that either Zurich or Antwerp was the place of its origin. Unlike Tyndale's version, which had been translated from the original tongues, Coverdale's translation was principally from the Vulgate and Luther's Bible, while it also owed a great debt to Tyndale's own version. By this time, Coverdale had won favour with Sir Thomas Cromwell, who was then Chief Minister to Henry VIII., and with Sir Thomas More. Times had changed and the King, having quarrelled with the Church of Rome, permitted the Bible to be issued towards the end of 1535, with a dedication to His Majesty.

Following swiftly, there appeared, in 1537, Matthew's Bible, the real author being John Rogers, one of the early Reformers, afterwards the first martyr in Mary Tudor's reign. This was not an independent version but was largely drawn from Tyndale's translation. It was published by the Authority of King Henry VIII., and, in 1539, a revision was made by Coverdale, which became known as the "Great Bible," so called because of its size, fifteen inches long by nine inches wide. The Great Bible was, therefore, the first "Authorised Version," in English, and in furtherance of this an injunction was issued to the clergy requiring that a copy be set up in every parish church. Thus, within thirteen years of the burning of Tyndale's New Testament, the battle of the English Bible was finally won. In the Book of Common Prayer that is in use to-day, the Psalter and the sentences in the Communion Service are taken unchanged from this Bible.

In 1539, there also appeared a folio edition called "Travener's Bible." Richard Travener was a barrister; later he became a clergyman. His Bible never had any great influence on later versions although his wide knowledge of Greek enabled him to make many minor improvements on previous translations.

The English Reformation was now to receive a severe check; for during the last years of Henry VIII.'s reign we find the Roman Catholic influence gaining ground by the sudden downfall of Richard Cromwell, the King's Vice-Regent. In 1543, all the Tyndale and Coverdale Bibles were prohibited, and the use of the Great Bible was forbidden to the mass of the people.

In terror at the change in the King's attitude, many of the

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Reformers were forced to flee to the Continent, until the death of the King brought the brief interval of suspense to an end. Under the reign of Edward VI. they were welcomed back again to England, but the short reign of six years and a half was only a breathing space before the terrors of Mary Tudor's period.

Once again, the open reading of the Scriptures was prohibited, and the copies which had been set up in the churches were burned. Still, the popular feeling for the Bible in the English tongue could not be entirely suppressed and there must have been thousands of copies hidden away in the homes of the people.

Many of the English exiles settled in Geneva, and among the illustrious names of those who were responsible for a new version called the Geneva Bible, issued in the year 1560, we find those of John Knox the Scottish Reformer, Miles Coverdale, and William Whittingham, Calvin's brother-in-law. These ardent men worked night and day on this Bible for more than ten years. Before it was completed Mary Tudor died and Queen Elizabeth came to the throne. The Geneva Bible (it has been nicknamed the "Breeches Bible" because in Genesis III. 7 it reads "breeches" while other versions read "aprons") was dedicated to Elizabeth and it is of particular interest to note that it was the first Bible to be divided into verses as we have it in our Bibles to-day. Besides being the first to print in italics all the words not in the original, it was also the first Bible to be set in the Roman type with which we are so familiar to-day.

This new version was so great a success that it has been recorded that during Queen Elizabeth's reign no fewer than sixty editions were printed. In Scotland, particularly, under the great influence of John Knox, it soon became the household Bible, while in England for many years after the publication of our Authorised Version in 1611, it continued to hold almost equal popularity with the newer books.

The success of the Geneva Bible was, however, somewhat disquieting to the two Churches of England and Rome. The Churchmen of England were uneasy about the hold which an unauthorised version had obtained in the hearts of the people against their own Bible, and to the faithful of both Churches there were many annotations which held prelacy and papacy to



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scorn. Soon after Elizabeth's Accession to the Throne, therefore, the leaders of the Church of England felt it was essential that the work of a new translation should be undertaken which would be free from any trace of partisanship and which would be issued under the authority of Church and State.

In 1568, the version known as the Bishops' Bible was published. Its chief promoter was Archbishop Parker, who, with eight bishops and many deans and professors, set himself to produce "one other special Bible for the Churches." It was clearly based on the Great Bible and every effort was made to attain the best possible renderings. It continued to be the standard version of Church and State until the publication of the Authorised Version in 1611, although the Geneva Bible was still the people's choice.

In the town of Rheims, in France, where many Roman Catholic refugee scholars were located, there appeared, in 1582, a new translation of the New Testament. It was probably issued as part of an attempt to win back the people of England from the Protestant faith to the Church of Rome. It has been said that it was on this Testament that Mary, Queen of Scots, swore her last oath of innocence on the evening before her execution, despite attempts to turn her from it on the plea that the book was false. By the same translators an English rendering of the Old Testament was published at Douai, in 1610, and this version with a revised edition of the Rheims New Testament constitute the Douai-Bible, the complete book having been fully translated from the Latin Vulgate.

### THE AUTHORISED VERSION

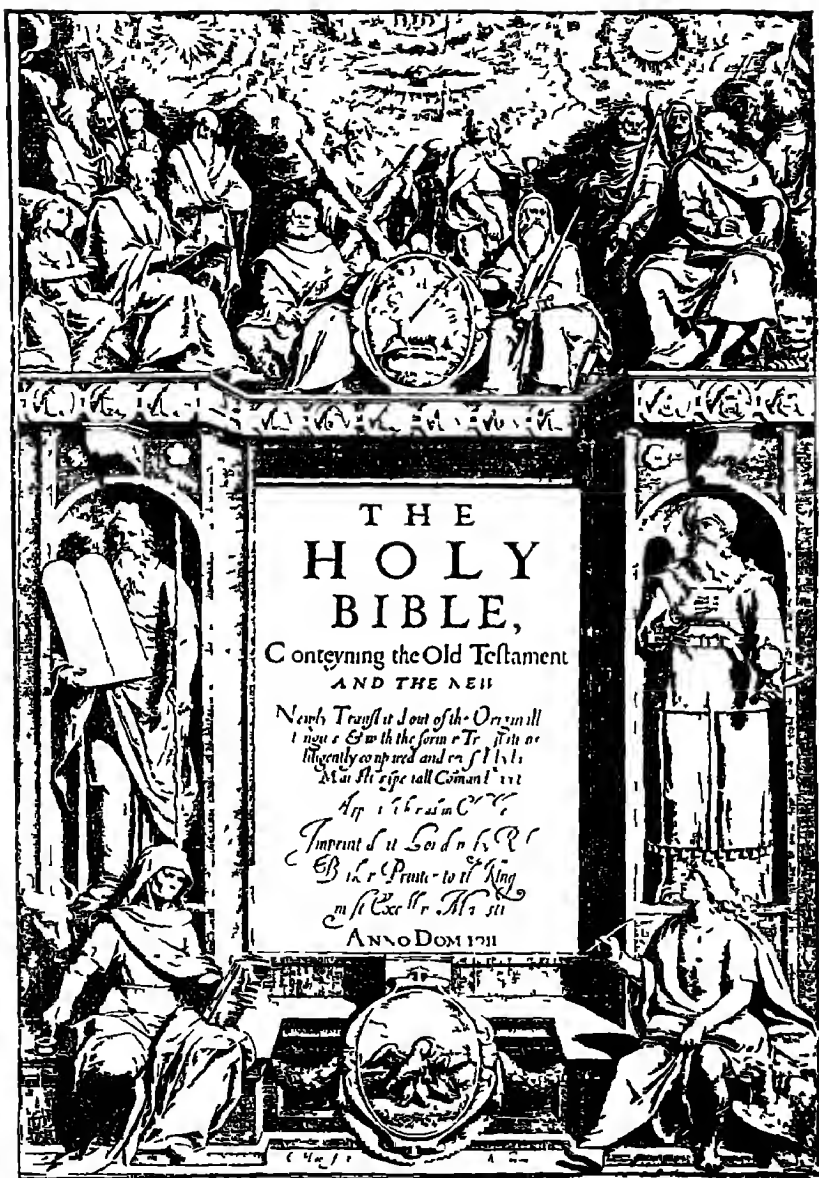
When, at the death of Queen Elizabeth, in 1603, James I. came from Scotland to the throne, there was great religious dissension throughout the country, not only between Roman Catholics and Protestants but even among the various groups of Protestants themselves. A few years before, the Church of England had its own internal troubles which finally led to the non-conforming Puritans leaving the Church. At the same time the Roman Catholics hoped for some support from the son of Mary, Queen of Scots, who had been a devout adherent of their faith.

Coming from Presbyterian Scotland, James was faced with

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a very difficult problem. It was clearly seen that only the issue of a new version would smooth out the religious trouble. Foolish and short-sighted as James was in many of his dealings with the groups, it is to his undying credit that he, more than any other at the Conference which was held at Hampton Court, in 1604, favoured the scheme of revision. Perhaps he was vain enough to realise that a new translation under his Royal Authority would enhance the glory of his reign, but it should be remembered that he was a man of considerable learning and the work would be after his own heart. He did not hide his genuine dislike of the Geneva Bible and particularly of its marginal notes, and when he issued his instructions to the translators he ordered that no notes should be added to the new version. The work was speedily undertaken by fifty-four of the leading scholars of the day, including the Professors of Hebrew and Greek at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. They were divided into six groups, meeting at Oxford, Cambridge and Westminster. Each group had its own portion and after each member of the group had translated it by himself, the groups then met, conferred on what each had done and decided on a translation to be submitted for final review. Every available aid was given to the groups, with the help of the best translations in other languages, to discover the correct meaning of each passage. Although the basis laid down for the new Bible was the *Bishops'*, every previous version influenced the translation of the "authorised." The spirit of Tyndale is especially evident, whilst Wycliffe's, the Geneva, and the Rheims have also left their imprint on it.

But it is to the revisers themselves that we owe a debt of gratitude for the great beauty, grace and dignity of language "that lives on the ears like music that can never be forgotten." It has had a wonderful influence on our literature and language; and it is inherent in the soul of the English speaking peoples. When first published in 1611, it was slow to secure complete favour, but before fifty years had passed it had completely won its way to the heart of the nation. It was produced at a period without parallel in our history, when the names of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Spenser, and Bacon had already ennobled our language by the beauty of their poetry and prose—a glorious age in the history of our race. But the greatest treasure it has left to us is our beloved "*Authorised*"



Title of the Authorised Bible of 1611

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**Version."** To-day, after more than three centuries it is still "the most valuable thing that this world affords."

So amply has this Bible satisfied the needs of succeeding generations that a long period of years elapsed before another version appeared. Towards the end of the nineteenth century a revision was considered advisable because of the steady increase in the knowledge of the original Hebrew and Greek Texts, and the new information obtained from the study of manuscripts that were scarcely known to the scholars who had made the King James (*Authorised*) Version. Since 1611, too, there were many English words which had completely changed their meaning.

As a result of the Convocation of Canterbury, in 1870, a committee was formed, which, in co-operation with a similar body in the United States of America, undertook the work of revision, thus making the first international effort to bring the "*Authorised Version*" into accord with the present standard of Biblical knowledge.

*The Revised New Testament* was issued in 1881, and the *Old Testament* in 1885. After a period of fifty years it must be said that this version has not had the success that was anticipated for it. To many Bible students it has proved invaluable because it is more accurate in the translation from the original than its predecessor but it lacks the great literary charm that has made the "*Authorised Version*" the well-beloved Bible of our people.

Since the beginning of the present century a number of modern versions have been issued, which are the work of individuals, or of small groups of scholars, and which have as their purpose the presentation of the Bible in the ordinary speech of to-day. Of these versions two of the most important and most widely used are:

"The New Testament in Modern Speech," an idiomatic translation into everyday English by Richard F. Weymouth, M.A., Litt.D.

"A New Translation of the Bible," by James Moffatt, D.D., D. Litt.

Let us close our story of how we got our Bible with the hope that we will always remember how God, through all the ages, has wonderfully inspired men to preserve and interpret His message. Also that, as we remember with gratitude all those men and women who, in the years of persecution, gladly gave their lives that this precious gift might be given to us in our tongue, we will value our Bible more than we have ever done.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THROUGH THE BIBLE is not a commentary, but is a descriptive narrative, based on the Authorised Version, selected with the object of making clear the essential unity of the story.

I have tried to show something of the historical and spiritual drama, the human quality and characterisation, and the continual Presence of God whether rightly understood or not, from Jehovah to Jesus Christ.

Broadly I have accepted God as the true Hero of the Bible, so far as Man has yet understood Him.

In order to make good what I have attempted, it has been vital to accept guidance from great scholars and writers whose works I have consulted, and for whose help I am so much indebted. Amongst many others the following books have been invaluable:

THE NEW COMMENTARY. *Edited by* CHARLES GORE, S.P.C.K. This book is quite irreplaceable as a source of information, textual criticism and sequence.

THE REVISED VERSION I should like to acknowledge the valuable help I have received from the "Revised Version" a few renderings of which I have used in the text, and from the Helps and Appendix printed in the 1915 Editions.

A PILGRIMAGE TO PALESTINE *By* Dr. Fosdick. (*Student Christian Movement Press*) I must acknowledge the great help and inspiration I have received through this absorbingly vivid book, which makes the Bible live. It ought to be in every school library. . . . Two Quotations occur on pages 325 and 452-453.

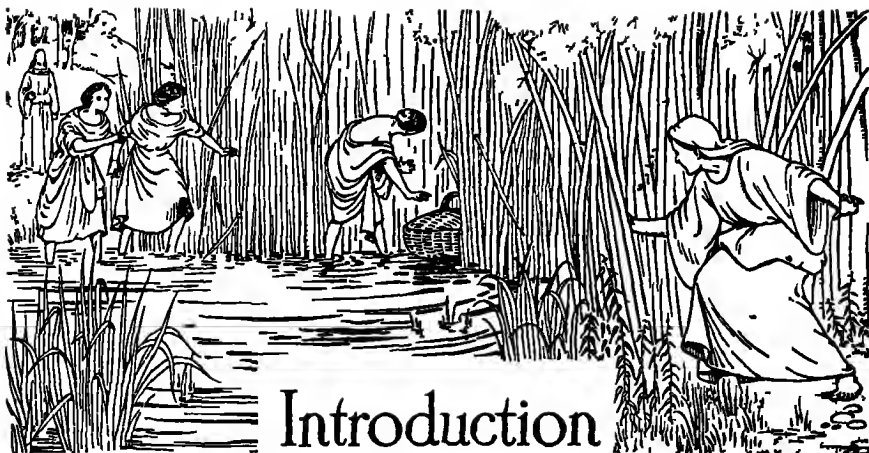
DR. MOFFATT'S TRANSLATION of the Old Testament. Though I have not quoted Dr. Moffatt's renderings, I have been greatly helped by the readings, the sequences and the excellent introduction, and the manner in which the text is differentiated by the arrangement and printing. No serious student can afford to be without this book.

#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

**THE BIBLE.** *By* Dr. PEAKE. (*Hodder and Stoughton.*) The "Bible", its origin, its significance and its abiding worth. This book has been of great service to me as a reliable authority for study and reference.

**THE JESUS OF HISTORY—PAUL OF TARSUS.** *By* Dr. GLOVER. (*Student Christian Movement Press.*) Both these books have been a great help and inspiration to me, in the course of my narrative.

Amongst other books I have used I would specially mention: "The International Critical Commentary," "Dictionaries of the Bible" (*Smith-Hastings*), "Life and Works of Paul," Dean Farrar.



## Introduction

**I**T is indeed a wonderful journey to travel down the centuries in the company of the men, women, and children of the Bible. We are out to understand how they lived, and what they thought, and we shall lose the best thrill of our journey unless we try to put ourselves side by side with them. We shall then delight in their joys, and be sorry when they are disappointed, or when they do wrong.

We shall often admire them, and feel proud of their actions, but sometimes we shall feel surprised at what they do. For in those long ago days, men had strange ideas as to what was right and wrong. The Bible is the greatest library in existence, for the stories contained in it help us to understand the marvellous patience of God with mankind.

The real "Hero" of the Bible is God.

God is called "Jehovah" in the early stories; and we shall discover that some of our Bible companions loved Jehovah passionately and faithfully, and to some extent understood Him. But many, like the heathen round about, still thought of God as hard and even cruel, and as a God who must be appeased by sacrifices.

It was only gradually that men and women began to understand God better, and to discover Him as a Father who loved them.

When we reach the Third Part of our Journey, we shall find that the real God is just like Jesus Christ.

*And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*



# THE OLD TESTAMENT







# Part One

## CHAPTER I

### IN THE BEGINNING

**H**OW did our world start?

That is a question which we have all asked, and which no one, not even the most learned scientists, can tell us exactly, though we know a great deal more to-day than we did even a hundred years ago. Our Bible stories, of which there are two, make it clear that the world did not come about by chance, but that God was the creator, not only of the world but of the whole universe and of mankind.

One story tells us that, "In the beginning, God created the Heaven and the Earth." But how long ago the "beginning" was, it does not explain. But it goes on to tell us that, "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep," and that the Spirit of God moved or brooded upon the face of the waters, and that God said, "Let there be light! And there was light."

In another part of the Bible we read: "The LORD by wisdom founded the Earth; by understanding He established the Heavens."

This first story also tells us that God created light on the First Day, the Heavens on the Second Day, the plants on the Third Day, the Sun and the Moon on the Fourth Day, the Fishes and the Birds on the Fifth Day, the Animals and Man on the Sixth Day.

Then "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the Sixth Day.

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the Seventh Day God ended His work which He

## IN THE BEGINNING

had made; and he rested on the Seventh Day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the Seventh Day."

But the second story puts it rather differently, and explains more fully the early idea of the coming of man.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE GARDEN

WE must now look into a sweet sunny garden, planted by God, and filled with everything beautiful. It is called the Garden of Eden, for Eden is a Hebrew word which means "delight." so we may, if we choose, call it the "Garden of Delight."

It was watered by rivers, and was glorious with trees, flowers, glades, and fruits, and in the centre of the Garden there stood a strange tree called the Tree of Life. There was also a second tree, called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

"And the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the Garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' "

The word Adam means "man"—all mankind—but in the story we think of Adam as one man of that name.

Adam was lonely in the beautiful garden, and though he called all the animals to him, and gave them names he could find no companion.

So Jehovah caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and as he slept He took a rib from his side and closed up the flesh again. Then from the rib, He built up a woman, and gave the woman to Adam as his wife, and she was called Eve.

Adam and Eve lived in happy innocence in the garden, where

## THE GARDEN

Jehovah Himself sometimes walked in the cool of the day to talk with the Man and Woman He had made. Adam and Eve were trusted by God to keep the Garden beautiful, but we do not know how long they enjoyed their Garden of Delight.

One day, a serpent appeared to Eve, as she was resting in view of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and tempted her to taste of the forbidden fruit. Eve was surprised, and told the Serpent that Jehovah had forbidden them to eat the fruit, for if they did they would surely die.

"Ye shall not surely die!" said the cunning Serpent boldly. "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

So Eve was tempted as she looked at the beautiful fruit, and she believed the Serpent rather than God, and took the fruit and ate it and gave some to Adam, and he ate also.

From that moment the Garden of Delight was spoiled, and as Adam and Eve looked at one another, they felt ashamed. They had never before been ashamed of not wearing clothes, but now they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. But when evening came, and the air grew cool, they heard the voice of Jehovah, and, filled with sorrow and dread, they hid themselves amongst the trees.

But it was no use to hide, for again the voice came: "Adam, where art thou?"

Then Adam and Eve were obliged to come from their hiding place; and Adam said, "I heard Thy voice in the Garden; and I was afraid because I was naked, and hid myself."

"Who told thee that thou wast naked?" asked Jehovah. "Hast thou eaten of the Tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?"

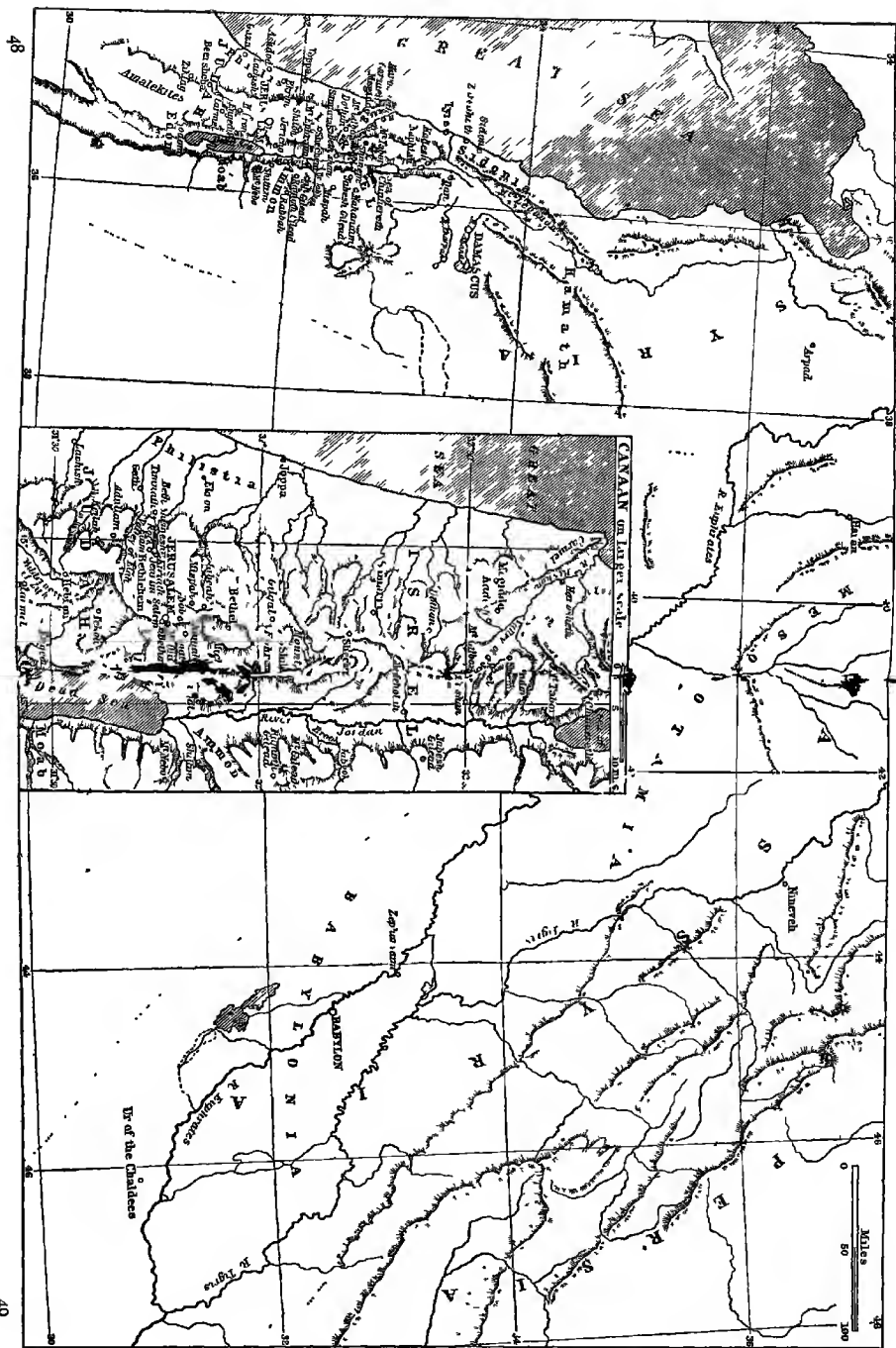
In his terror, Adam laid the blame upon Eve:

"The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat!"

"What is this that thou hast done?" asked Jehovah of Eve.

"The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat," she said sadly.

Adam and Eve had chosen. They had broken faith with Jehovah, their Creator and friend. They had chosen to believe the lies of the cunning Serpent, and bitter consequences followed.



## THE GARDEN

Jehovah was still their friend, and he made them coats of skins to cover their nakedness: but He could not allow them to stay in the Garden of Delight, in case they should eat of the Tree of Life. Their lot was to go forth into the wide world, to toil and work, to suffer and to conquer, and to learn ever more about God and how to do his will.

Sorrow was in their hearts, and pain in their faces as they left the Garden they had spoiled; and as they turned back to take a last look they saw an Angel with a flaming sword, guarding the Tree of Life.

So the story of Adam, whether he is meant to be one man or all mankind, is given to teach the long-ago idea as to how death came into the world.

We shall have a long journey to take before we come to that Christmas Night when the Babe of Bethlehem came to earth to teach mankind the way to the Tree of Life, and to conquer death for ever.

## CHAPTER 3

### CAIN AND ABEL

It will be necessary to take many long jumps as we pass on our journey, for, as we said in the Introduction, these early stories are very disjointed, and some of those which would help to join up and make things clearer may have been lost.

At any rate, the next story of Cain and Abel shows us that the country round about where the Garden of Eden was supposed to be was already populated with certain tribes. Cain was a married man, and Abel may also have been married.

Cain was fond of working on the land, and making the fruits and the plants grow; but Abel was a shepherd, and preferred to look after the sheep.

For some reason not given to us, Jehovah was not pleased with Cain, and when Cain offered Him fruits on the Altar, He would not accept the offering.

## CAIN AND ABEL

When Abel brought his offering of part of a lamb, Jehovah accepted it.

Cain was therefore very angry and downcast, and Jehovah asked him why he was angry, and whether he had some sin in his heart. But Cain became all the more jealous of Abel, and one day, having called him away into a lonely field, he attacked him and slew him.

We cannot even imagine Cain's thoughts as he saw his murdered brother lying on the ground, nor the fear in his heart when he heard Jehovah's voice.

"Where is Abel thy brother?" asked God.

"I know not!" answered Cain. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

"What hast thou done?" demanded Jehovah. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now thou art cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand."

Cain's punishment came swiftly. He was driven away into the Land of Nod, which means "Wandering" or "The Land of the Vagrant," and when Cain complained that his punishment was greater than he could bear, because any one who saw him might kill him, Jehovah set his mark upon him and said: "Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken upon him seven-fold."

"So Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the Land of Nod." He took his wife with him, and built a city, and called it after his son Enoch.

## CHAPTER 4

### NOAH AND THE FLOOD

ADAM lived for nine hundred and thirty years, and had many sons and daughters, including Seth, a son who was born after Cain had killed Abel. We should like to know how much Adam and Eve told their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the Garden of Delight, and of all they had lost through disobedience.



## NOAH AND THE FLOOD

Amongst Adam's descendants there was a man with the same name as Cain's son, Enoch. He had certainly learnt of Jehovah, and it is told of him that he walked so closely with God that he never died, but that God "took him." His son, Methuselah, lived to be nine hundred and sixty years old, and Methuselah's grandson was named Noah.

By this time, of course, there were a great many people living round about this eastern land, and we wish we were able to say that they were serving Jehovah and learning to do His will. We are told that there were giants on the earth in those days, and many mighty men and women of renown. But, alas, God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and the thoughts in his heart were evil every day. And Jehovah was sorry that He had made man, and He grieved continually, because the people would choose the wrong, and turn away from the good. Noah was the only man who tried, in the midst of the wickedness which was going on around him, to do right, and it is written that "Noah walked with God."

Therefore it seemed that God had found one man to whom He could speak out His thoughts. And so God astonished Noah by telling him that because the earth was filled with violence, He intended to destroy the people by a great flood. But God wished to save Noah and his family and some of the animals, and He gave Noah directions how to build an ark which would shelter them from the flood. This ark was something which would float, but it is not likely that it was the sort of construction which we can buy in the toy shops to-day.

Noah believed God, and he could see for himself the disgraceful deeds which were happening; and while he built the ark, he preached earnestly to the people, pleading with them to do right instead of wrong. But they only mocked, and told one another that Noah must be mad.

But Noah was not mad. The flood came, and only Noah and his family, and the chosen animals and birds, were saved. And after many days, God remembered Noah, his wife, his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives, and he sent a mighty wind to drive back the waters. The rain stopped, and presently they could feel that the ark was no longer floating, but had touched

## NOAH AND THE FLOOD

earth. It had grounded on one of the summits of the Ararat range of mountains.

In their excitement, one of them proposed that they should let fly a raven. Off flew the raven, thankful to be released, and he flew round and about, but never returned to the ark. Then they sent out a dove. But the dove was soon terrified at the wide expanse of water, and as they watched, she returned, and Noah put out his hand and drew her in.

A week later, he sent out the dove again, and this time, she disappeared out of sight. But in the evening, when the sun was setting in all his glory, the dove returned, carrying an olive leaf in her beak. Then they were quite sure that the waters were subsiding, for the dove had found a tree.

Noah waited seven days longer and sent out the dove again; but that evening, as they watched and waited, the night fell, the stars came out, and the dove had not returned. Then they were quite sure that the dove had found dry land.

So at last Jehovah told Noah to come forth from the ark, and the first thing Noah did was to build an altar and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

As Noah and his family were praising God, a wonderful rainbow arched itself in the heavens, and Jehovah promised that this "bow in the clouds" should be a sign that there would never again be such a flood to destroy the earth.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE TOWER OF BABEL

JEHOVAH had instructed Noah and his family that they were to have children and replenish the earth. Therefore as time went on, there were multitudes of men and women, descended from Noah through Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These people all spoke one language; and as they wandered eastward they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and settled down there.

But Jehovah had intended that they should spread abroad and

## THE TOWER OF BABEL

not congregate together in one place, and here comes the story of the Tower of Babel.

"They said to one another, 'Go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly,' and they had brick for stone and slime had they for mortar.

"And they said, 'Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'

"And Jehovah came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

"And Jehovah said, 'Behold this people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do.

"Go to, let us go down and confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

"So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence, upon the face of the whole earth; and they left off to build the city.

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel."

## CHAPTER 6

### ABRAM, THE FATHER OF ISRAEL

WE must now pass through the years, to the times when different tribes were rising and struggling after power, especially in the countries of the Nile, the Tigris, the Euphrates, and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, called in the Bible the Great Sea.

Museums have become fascinating with the discoveries of keen explorers in these lands. We find pictures and writings on stone and pottery, altars, tombs, ornaments, household utensils, images of gods and goddesses, trade "letters" written on tablets, the very seals with which men sealed their contracts and agreements, together with tools, weapons, and even the combs with which the women combed their hair.

If we were to travel abroad, we should see the remains of great temples and buildings, and the very sites of the places mentioned in the Bible. It is exciting indeed to see or hear of the finds of

## ABRAM, THE FATHER OF ISRAEL

the British and American explorers, who have discovered things so priceless to history, in Ur of the Chaldees, the city in which Abram lived and played and was taught when a boy, and in which he was married to Sarai, whose name means "Princess."

We are, in fact, leaving the days of story-telling for those of the beginnings of real history. But let us first take a look at the map (Pages 48-49). To the south we see Egypt, and two arms of the Red Sea, which enclose the Wilderness of Sinai. Northwards to the west lies the Great Sea, and skirting it along the shore lies the Philistine country, Canaan. Far to the east lie the rivers Tigris and the Euphrates, which were two separate rivers in Abram's time. Ur of the Chaldees lies on the west of the Euphrates, Babylon rather higher up, and Nineveh to the north-west of the Tigris.

Throughout the known world at that time the people worshipped idols, or what the idols stood for, and how far they had lost the knowledge of the one true God we do not know. In Ur of the Chaldees, the moon was the principal object of worship, until a king arose who established the worship of the sun.

Now, in Ur there lived one of the descendants of Noah's son Shem. His name was Terah, and he was probably a great prince or sheikh.

He had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

This first mention of Abram means that we have reached a new road in our journey THROUGH THE BIBLE, which will bring us on through the centuries to Jesus Christ Himself. It is as though a signpost had been set up, to make us think very seriously about the way we are going.

We know nothing of the boyhood of Abram, nor why, living in the heathen city of Ur, his thoughts turned to Jehovah. We do not even know how much his father, Terah, taught him of this one true God of his ancestors.

But it is clear that Jehovah saw in Abram a young man whom He could choose to become the father of a great nation, and through whom men might learn of the true God, and whose descendant would be Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, through Whom, one day, all the world would be blessed.

It was Abram's tremendous faith in God which made God choose him out for this task, in the midst of all the wickedness

## ABRAM, THE FATHER OF ISRAEL

and idol-worshipping that was going on around him. We are told that "Abram BELIEVED GOD" and we are now to take our journey with Abram, and see how Jehovah tested him and trained him to be actually "The Friend of God," as he was called.

Terah and his family were important people in Ur, and after Abram had married the Princess Sarai, and after Haran was dead, Terah told Abram and Nahor that he proposed to leave Ur and migrate to a place called Haran. Abram was not surprised to hear this, for already God had been telling him that he was to go to a strange land, which God would one day show him. This was God's way of guiding him as to what he ought to do. So Terah set forth, taking with him Abram and Sarai, and Lot, Haran's son. Nahor did not join this migration, but we must not forget his name, for we shall meet him again.

Let us try to imagine a great caravan setting out from Ur, under Terah's leadership. There were slaves—men, women, and children—camels laden with goods, jewels, gold and silver, and precious possessions of all kinds, together with tents, food, and weapons. There were also asses as beasts of burden, and flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. They carried arms in case of assault, and, choosing the fertile tracts of country, they moved slowly onward, for they could not advance faster than the weakest sheep could walk. And every night they camped out under the stars.

At last they reached Haran. The name means "road," and it lay on the great caravan road which had been made between Egypt and Damascus. It was the frontier town of Babylonia, and commanded both the roads and the fords of the Euphrates. Here the company settled; and Abram stayed there until at last his father Terah died, and Abram buried him with all honour.

Then it was that Jehovah spoke again to Abram, who had now reached the age of seventy-five.

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee," said Jehovah, "and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

So Abram was not to remain with the rest of the tribe, but to

## ABRAM, THE FATHER OF ISRAEL

travel on, and Abram, God's Friend, trusted God so completely that he at once obeyed.

A large number of Terah's tribe remained in Haran, and became the "Syrians" whom we shall meet again. We must, however, be careful not to confuse the Syrians with the Assyrians, who were quite a different race.

Abram took his nephew, Lot, with him, and as they trekked south they became known as the "Hebrews," which means the men who "passed over the river." They were a great company, and they travelled slowly with the masses of flocks and herds. They passed the Sea of Galilee and many other places we shall read about later. They were not hindered in their travelling by the Canaanites who occupied the land, and when they reached Sichem, and rested there, Jehovah appeared to Abram and again repeated His promise.

"Unto thy seed will I give this land."

So Abram built an altar there.

Then they moved ever southwards, passing Bethel; but now trouble came. There was a famine in the land, which meant shortness of food and water for such a company, so they passed onwards into the Land of Egypt. Here they stayed for some time, until the famine was over, and when they returned from Egypt they were richer than ever with cattle and sheep, and it seemed as though there could not be water and food for such a multitude.

We shall not be surprised to hear that Lot's herdsmen and Abram's herdsmen quarrelled, as to which of them should have the best grazing for their flocks. Indeed they quarrelled so fiercely that Abram was greatly troubled; but he refused to show any anger, and spoke peacefully to Lot, in a way which gives us a peep into the beauty of Abram's character.

"Let there be no strife, I pray thee," he said to Lot, "between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself I pray thee from me. If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

It was the uncle who allowed the nephew to choose; and as they stood together on the hills of Bethel, they looked south-eastward,

## ABRAM, THE FATHER OF ISRAEL

and Lot saw a lovely valley, well watered, near to the City of Sodom and four other cities.

Lot made his choice of this land. It was a dangerous choice to make, for the people of Sodom were noted for their wickedness. But Lot was only thinking of the fertile land, and the chance he would have to grow still richer. So he separated off his flocks and herds and his servants, and he and his wife and his young daughters said good-bye, and set out for the new life.

Abram must have felt lonely, for he was fond of Lot, as we shall see later when Lot was in difficulty; and Jehovah understood and came near to His servant, Abram, and spoke to him.

"Lift up now thine eyes," said Jehovah, "and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, eastward and westward. For all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever. And I will make of thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall also thy seed be numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it and the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

So Abram moved from Bethel, and pitched his tent in Mamre, a beautiful word which means "The land of Visions."

## CHAPTER 7

### TROUBLE ROUND SODOM

WHEN Abram and Sarai settled down in Mamre, and Lot went to live near Sodom, we must not make the mistake of thinking that life in these lands was all quietness and peace. There was constant struggle between the "kings" of the various tribes, and the stronger rulers were always trying to enslave the smaller tribes, or to make them pay tribute. Some of the tribes of Canaan, together with the kings of Sodom and the other cities of the plain, had been conquered by Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, which was a country in the far east.

These kings served Chedorlaomer for twelve years, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled and refused to pay tribute any more.

## TROUBLE ROUND SODOM

Chedorlaomer, as so often happens, made an alliance with other kings, in order to become stronger, and his most important ally was Amraphel, King of Shinar, the Hebrew name for Babylon.

Here we come to an important point in our journey, for by means of ancient inscriptions discovered in recent years it has been found that Amraphel is the same as Hammurabi, a great ruler in Babylon. This is very important, because we find that Hammurabi lived about 2000 years B.C. (Before Christ), and this gives us a date for Abram, and we know approximately when he lived.

We shall hardly be surprised that Chedorlaomer and his allies not only conquered some tribes in the North of Canaan, but that they advanced to the Plain of Sodom to punish the rebels there.

One day Abram was startled by the arrival of a messenger who had escaped from Sodom, and had probably been sent off by Lot. The messenger who had raced at his highest speed, brought the terrible news that the Kings of the Plain had been defeated by Chedorlaomer and his allies, that the King of Sodom had fled to the mountains, that Sodom had been looted, and everything of value carried away, and, worst of all for Abram to hear, Lot, his wife and his daughters and his whole company had been carried off into captivity.

It was a dreadful thing in those days to be carried into captivity and turned into slaves, and Abram knew that he must rescue his nephew who had been so foolish as to go and live near Sodom. He called in some friendly neighbours, Mamre, Aner, and Eshcol, and, gathering his own servants, they set off on a forced march after the victors. They went down the valleys and up the passes, and after about four days and nights of rapid march they came upon Chedorlaomer's camp, which had been pitched in a valley. The great army was demoralised by victory, and hampered by the captives and the plunder, and when at night Abram and his small band rushed down upon them, the surprise led to a wild panic; a great victory was won, and Abram not only rescued Lot and all the captives, but he secured the plunder as well.

The King of Sodom heard the amazing news, and hurried forth to meet Abram as he was returning to Mamre. Abram had just reached Salem, where the King and Priest, Melchizedek, who



## TROUBLE ROUND SODOM

was Priest of Elyon, which is the Hebrew for "God Most High," came out to meet him. Melchizedek brought bread and wine for the weary host, and blessed Abram, saying:

"Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand."

Although Melchizedek did not mean Jehovah by the "Most High God," Abram had great respect for him, and was glad to receive his blessing, and he gave him a tenth part of the spoil.

The King of Sodom was so thankful to Abram, that he wished to hand over all the rest of the plunder, so long as he might have the people. But Abram declined with great dignity this evil king's offer; for what he had done he had done for his nephew and his people.

"I have lifted up mine hand unto Jehovah," said Abram, "the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take anything of thine, lest thou shouldest say, 'I have made Abram rich.'"

"Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men that went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion."

Thus Lot was saved; yet it is astonishing to learn that in spite of this warning he went back to live near Sodom.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE ANGELS' VISIT

ONCE again Jehovah came to Abram and promised that his descendants should be as the stars for multitude, and He was pleased that Abram believed Him. Yet as the time passed, Sarai grew more and more anxious because God had not given her a son.

So one day she persuaded Abram to take as a slave-wife an Egyptian named Hagar. It was quite usual in those days for

## THE ANGELS' VISIT

important chiefs to have more than one wife, so Abram agreed, and when Hagar's boy was born, Abram called him Ishmael, which means "Whom God hears." But God warned Hagar that her son would be as wild as an ass of the wilderness is wild, and that every man's hand would be against him, and that his tribe would live in the East Land.

Abram grew fond of Ishmael, and he began to wonder whether Ishmael was the heir whom Jehovah had promised. So yet again Jehovah, who was keeping Abram waiting in order to test his faith, came to him, and again repeated his promise that Abram should be the father of many nations. Jehovah changed Abram's name to Abraham, which meant "Father of a great multitude," and when Abraham, as we must now call him, hoped that Ishmael might be the promised heir, He declared that it was Sarai who would have the son, and that her name must now be changed to Sarah. Yet Jehovah also promised a great blessing to Ishmael, and said that He would make of him also a great nation.

This promise came true, for Ishmael became the ancestor of many of the Arab races, and the prophet Mahomet, thousands of years later, claimed to be descended from him, though this could never be proved. As we travel on, we shall meet with Ishmaelites who always claimed that they were descended from Abraham, though not from Sarah.

So Abraham again believed God; for his eyes could see by faith far into the future, to a wonderful heavenly city without earthly foundations, whose builder and maker was God. And yet as Ishmael grew older it almost seemed as though God had forgotten his promise, for Sarah had still no son.

Now, Abraham was sitting one day at his tent door in the heat of the day; for the tent was pitched under the trees to shelter him from the blazing sun. Looking up, he noticed three strangers standing a short distance away. Instantly, with all the politeness of a great sheikh, Abraham rose, ran to meet them, bowed himself to the ground, and spoke to the one who appeared to be the chief.

"My lord," he said, "if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away I pray thee from thy servant. Let a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree;

## THE ANGELS' VISIT

and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts, after that ye shall pass on; for therefore are ye come to your servant."

And they answered: "Do as thou hast said."

"And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.'

"And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf, tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it.

"And he took butter and milk and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

"And they said unto him, 'Where is Sarah thy wife?'

"And he said; 'Behold, in the tent.'

"And he said; 'Lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.'

This was the story which Sarah had heard before, and she laughed, for she was sure that she was too old to have a son.

But the guest who had spoken was Jehovah, and he said:

"Wherefore did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for Jehovah?"

Sarah was now ashamed and afraid, and she came forward to excuse herself, and said, "I laughed not!"

"Nay," said Jehovah reprovingly, "but thou didst laugh!"

When the meal was over, and the strangers were refreshed, they rose, and as they looked in the direction of Sodom, where, we remember, Lot had gone to live, Abraham walked a short distance with his guests, until at last they stood on the high ground, from which, through a break in the low hills to the east, they could look towards Sodom, though they could not actually see the city.

Then the stranger, who was Jehovah Himself, spoke:

"Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I shall do? For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him."

Then Jehovah told His friend, Abraham, of the sins of Sodom and the neighbouring cities, which had come up to Him like a cry, and how He was sending His two angels down to the cities to make quite sure, before He destroyed them. Abraham was in great

## THE ANGELS' VISIT

distress, for he remembered Lot and his wife and daughters, and when the Angels had gone, he stood in deep respect before Jehovah.

"Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous be as the wicked, that be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?"

"And Jehovah said, 'If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the place for their sakes.'"

But a doubt seized upon Abraham.

"Behold now," he pleaded, "I have taken upon me to speak unto Jehovah which am but dust and ashes; peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five?"

"If I find there five and forty I will not destroy it," came the answer.

Then Abraham pleaded first for forty, for thirty, for twenty.

"I will not destroy it for twenty's sake," said Jehovah.

Then Abraham made a last appeal.

"Oh, let not Jehovah be angry, and I will speak yet this once. Peradventure ten shall be found there"

"I will not destroy it for ten's sake," said Jehovah.

Then Jehovah left Abraham, and Abraham returned to his tent, feeling somewhat relieved. It could not be possible for less than ten righteous to be found in Sodom

Next morning, Abraham rose up very early and hurried to the hill. But as he looked towards Sodom, his heart sank. Jehovah had not even found ten righteous in the city, for the smoke was rising to the sky as from a furnace. Afterwards, Abraham learnt that the Angels had rescued Lot and his two daughters, and allowed them to escape to the little city of Zoar, which was spared for their sakes.

The Angels would also have saved Lot's sons-in-law, but they mocked and refused to believe that there was any danger of the city being destroyed. Lot's wife also, as she was being hurried away, still longed after Sodom and its wickedness, and she lingered and looked back, and was buried under a mound of salty ashes, or, as the Bible puts it, she "turned into a pillar of salt."

Even the sites of these cities of the plain are now lost, as they are covered by what we now call the Dead Sea.

## ISAAC AND ISHMAEL

### CHAPTER 8

#### ISAAC AND ISHMAEL

As God had promised, Sarah had a son, who was named Isaac, which means "laughter." Abraham and Sarah were very happy to think that they had a son, and when the time came for Isaac to be weaned, Abraham gave a feast in his honour. We can easily guess that Hagar was very disappointed that her son, Ishmael, was now set aside as the heir, and there was bitter feeling between her and her mistress.

It appears that the boys were friendly enough, but at the feast when Sarah noticed Ishmael she went off to Abraham in a great rage. "Cast out this bond-woman and her son!" she cried, "for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, Isaac!"

Abraham was deeply grieved at Sarah's words, for after all, Ishmael was his son; but while he was wondering what he ought to do, Jehovah spoke to him. He instructed Abraham to send away Hagar and Ishmael, and assured him that he must not be grieved on their account, for Jehovah would surely make of Ishmael a great nation, because he was Abraham's son.

So early next morning, Abraham took bread and a skin of water, and sent the mother and son away. We shall feel perhaps that this was unkind of Abraham, but we must remember that he acted at the command of God, and was confident that Jehovah would take care of Ishmael. Hagar went south towards Beer-sheba, and wandered some time in the wilderness, which was not of necessity a sandy desert, but a stretch of rough country, with hills and woods, and hiding places for wild animals.

At last Hagar and Ishmael had drunk all the water they had brought, and search as they might they could not find any spring. Fearing that Ishmael would die, Hagar, in her despair, left the boy under a shrub, and went away about as far as an arrow could be shot from a bow.

"Let me not see the death of the child!" she cried. And then she sank down and wept bitterly.





## ISAAC AND ISHMAEL

As for Ishmael he cried aloud and wept. And Jehovah heard the voice of the child, and an Angel called from heaven:

"What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the child where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, for I will make of him a great nation."

And then God opened Hagar's eyes to see a well of water, and she went and filled the skin, and gave the lad to drink.

As time passed, Ishmael grew up and became an archer, and lived in the wilderness, and God was with him. His mother took a wife for him out of the land of Egypt, where she herself had been born.

It is clear that Ishmael was always on friendly terms with his father Abraham, as we shall see later.

## CHAPTER 10

### IS ISAAC TO DIE?

ISAAC was now growing up, a delight to his father and mother, and Abraham must have been happy in the thought that he had believed Jehovah when He promised him this son, and had found Him true.

But Jehovah had one last test for His friend, and we can hardly imagine Abraham's astonishment when he received what appeared to be a most terrible command:

"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains that I shall tell thee of."

We have to admit that to Abraham this command would not appear so amazing as it does to us. All about him, the inhabitants of Canaan sacrificed human sacrifices, and it was a common belief that the eldest son belonged to a god in a very special way, and might have to be sacrificed. Yet if Isaac were sacrificed, how could his descendants become a great nation?

We cannot read Abraham's heart, as he argued backwards and



## IS ISAAC TO DIE?

forwards with himself. But he was sure that he must obey Jehovah, and have faith that, in spite of such a command, God would remain true to His promises.

So early next morning, not saying anything to Sarah, he rose and saddled his ass and took two of his young men with him, and called Isaac, without explaining anything to him.

They took wood for the sacrifice, and then set forth towards Mount Moriah, which was probably one of the mountains of Salem, afterwards called Jerusalem

On the third day, perhaps as they were passing over the hills where Bethlehem was afterwards built, Abraham looked far ahead and saw the mountain

"And Abraham said unto his young men, ' Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.' "

This sentence gives us a hint that Abraham still trusted Jehovah to save Isaac, but that there was some mystery in the command which would become plain. But as he and his son walked forward, Isaac carrying the wood, and his father the fire and the knife, Abraham was startled at hearing a question from his son.

"My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? "

"My son, God will provide himself the lamb for the sacrifice," said Abraham simply.

But when they reached the spot, Abraham built the altar and laid the wood, and then told Isaac that he must bind him and lay him on the altar. Isaac was a strong young lad, and could easily have resisted his aged father, or he could have run away. But he agreed to be the victim of his father's will, or, as he imagined, of Jehovah's

"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of Jehovah called unto him from Heaven and said,

"Abraham! Abraham!

"Here am I!" answered Abraham.

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me."

## IS ISAAC TO DIE?

How quickly Abraham must have dropped that knife, and unbound his son and embraced him!

Then the father and son noticed a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham took the ram, and offered it as a sacrifice instead of his son.

Abraham called the spot Jehovah-jirch, which means, "God provides on the hill."

But now a second time the Angel of Jehovah spoke:

"By Myself have I sworn, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice."

So father and son returned to the young men, and then they went on together back to Beer-sheba.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BURIAL OF SARAH

A GREAT SORROW came to Isaac when his mother, Sarah, died in Hebron. She was one hundred and twenty-seven years old. And after Abraham had mourned and wept for his wife, he had to decide at once where Sarah was to be buried.

Now, Abraham was a wanderer. In spite of his great wealth in cattle, sheep, camels, and slaves, he did not own one inch of the land which Jehovah had promised him. Therefore he hastened forth to the Gate of Hebron.

Why to the gate? Because it was at the gate of a city that trading went on, and bargains were made, where judges and chiefs sat to hear complaints and to do justice; where private people argued their quarrels, and where there were usually plenty of people standing about, who could be witnesses of anything that was settled.

## THE BURIAL OF SARAH

Hebron and the district round belonged to the Children of Heth, who were called Hittites and were amongst the original inhabitants of Canaan. The news passed round that the wife of the mighty prince, Abraham the Hebrew, had died, and the chiefs of the Children of Heth rose up respectfully when they saw Abraham approaching the gate. Abraham wasted no time, but made his request, so that all who were present might hear.

"I am a stranger and a visitor amongst you," said he, "and I have come to ask you to give me a burying place of my own amongst you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

The chiefs of the Children of Heth consulted together, and one of them answered with great politeness: "Hear us, my lord! Thou art a Prince of God amongst us. In the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead."

Perhaps Abraham and Isaac had already wandered round, to search for a resting-place for Sarah, and Abraham was able to say at once which place he would like. He bowed himself low before the chiefs, and asked that he might have the grave belonging to a man named Ephron.

"If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, I beg of you to ask Ephron to give me the cave of Machpelah which is in his field, for I am ready to give him the full money-value for it."

Now Ephron was sitting amongst the chiefs, and he instantly made answer to Abraham. "Nay, my lord," he said, "the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give to thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it to thee. Bury thy dead!"

But Abraham knew that this answer was only the usual Eastern politeness, so he answered.

"I pray thee hear me; I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there."

It was now Ephron's turn to speak, and he said, as though money were of no consequence to him:

"My lord, the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between thee and me?"

Abraham was very glad, and he weighed out the silver publicly, so that all present should be witnesses of what he had done. It was agreed and sealed that the field, the cave, and all the trees in the

## THE BURIAL OF SARAH

field and round the borders, should now belong to Abraham, as a sure property for ever.

It seems strange that the only piece of land that Abraham owned personally in the "Promised Land" was a field which he had bought with money, in order to make a family grave.

## CHAPTER 12

### A WIFE FOR ISAAC

ABRAHAM had a faithful servant named Eliezer, whom he trusted as though he were a son. Indeed, if Abraham had had no son, he would have made Eliezer his heir.

Abraham was growing old, and one day he called Eliezer into consultation.

Isaac was now a grown-up man and ought to marry, and in those days the parents arranged their children's marriages. It was most important that the wife of Isaac, who was heir to the promises made by Jehovah, should be one who had some knowledge of God, and was different from the heathen women around about.

"Place thy hand under my thigh," said Abraham to Eliezer, "and swear to me that thou wilt not find a wife for Isaac amongst the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. But thou shalt go into my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac."

We shall remember that Abraham came out from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran away in the north, where he lived until his father Terah died. But his brother, Nahor, had remained and formed a tribal settlement in the region of Mesopotamia, and had married and had children and grandchildren.

Abraham now wished Eliezer to take the journey to Mesopotamia, visit his kinsfolk, and bring back one of Nahor's granddaughters to be Isaac's wife.

"But," said Eliezer, "peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land; must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?"

## A WIFE FOR ISAAC

But Abraham was horrified at such an idea. Whatever happened **Eliezer** was on no account to take Isaac away from Canaan. If, however, the woman was not willing to come, then Eliezer would be clear of the oath which he had sworn.

So Eliezer took ten camels, laden with goods and presents, and rode off with the necessary slaves to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. It was a long and dangerous journey, as we shall see by the map, but at last Eliezer and his company arrived outside the city and drew up by the city well.

(Wells were usually placed outside a city so as to avoid the crowding and bustle and confusion which there often was around them.)

The sun was setting and troops of women were coming out from the city to draw water, for women were usually the water-carriers, and it was at the well that they met and gossiped and told the news.

Eliezer made his camels kneel down, and then he noticed the women, carrying their pitchers on their shoulders, and he wondered whether one of them could be the woman whom God meant him to take back as a wife for his master's son. So Eliezer kneeled and prayed that he might not make any mistake.

"O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray Thee send me good speed and show kindness to my master. Behold I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water; and let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, 'Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink,' and she shall say, 'Drink; and I will give thy camels drink also'; let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant, Isaac, and thereby shall I know that Thou hast showed kindness unto my master."

As he stopped praying, who should come gaily along, with her empty pitcher on her shoulder, but Nahor's granddaughter, Rebekah. Rebekah was a very beautiful girl, and she ran down the steps to the well, filled her pitcher, and brought it back.

The other young girls must have been surprised as they noticed this stranger speak to their companion, for Eliezer ran to meet her, and said, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher."

And she answered, "Drink, my lord!" and she hastened and let

## A WIFE FOR ISAAC

down her pitcher upon her hand and gave him to drink. "I will draw water for thy camels also!" she said.

So she emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran and drew more water, until there was enough for all the camels.

Eliezer wondered at her as he watched. Could it be that this lovely girl was to be Isaac's bride?

Then he took out a golden jewel for the forehead, of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets, and offered them to her.

"Whose daughter art thou?" he asked. "Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?"

In those days it was quite the custom for strangers to ask for hospitality, and Eliezer was amazed indeed when the young girl told him that she was the daughter of Bethuel, Isaac's cousin.

"Come," she said eagerly, "we have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in."

Then the man, overcome with gratitude, bowed his head and worshipped God. But meanwhile Rebekah rushed off to her mother's house, and told her strange story, and her brother Laban ran out to the stranger at the well.

"Come in, thou blessed of Jehovah!" he said. "Wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house and room for the camels."

So Eliezer followed Laban, and the camels were unloaded, and Eliezer's feet and the feet of his servants were washed, and a great feast was spread. But Eliezer said, "I will not eat until I have told my errand!"

As Bethuel, Rebekah's father and Laban listened, they were convinced that Jehovah was guiding the matter.

"This thing proceedeth from Jehovah!" they said; "we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee; take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as Jehovah hath spoken."

Then the servant again bowed himself before Jehovah, and the slaves brought out more presents for Rebekah, her father and mother and her brother, and they feasted, and that night they slept without having quite decided what was to be done.

But Eliezer was in a hurry, and next morning he asked that he might be sent away.

## A WIFE FOR ISAAC

"Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that, she shall go!" said Laban and her mother.

"Hinder me not," said Eliezer, "seeing that Jehovah hath prospered my way."

"We will call the damsel," they answered, "and enquire at her mouth."

And they called Rebekah and said, "Wilt thou go with this man?"

Rebekah answered, "I will go."

So they sent away Rebekah and her nurse, with Abraham's servant and the men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, "Sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them."

What an adventure it was for Rebekah to go off for such a long journey, to those whom she had never seen! What grief to say farewell to those whom it was scarcely likely that she would ever see again!

Now, it happened that on a certain evening, Isaac went out into the fields to pray, and looking up, he noticed clear against the sky the outlines of camels. Surely those were his father's camels? Had Eliezer succeeded? Was his bride on her way?

Rebekah, seeing a man walking in the field, asked Eliezer who he was, and she hastily descended from the camel.

"The man is my master's son!" replied Eliezer.

Then, as was the custom, Rebekah took a veil and covered herself. Isaac did not at first see how beautiful his bride was; but he welcomed her with all honour, and took her into the tent that had been his mother's.

They were married, and Isaac loved Rebekah tenderly, and was comforted after his mother's death.

But at last the time came for Abraham to die. He had lived to the age of one hundred and eighty-five years. His earthly life was over, and he went in spirit back to Jehovah, Whom he had loved and trusted.

Isaac at once sent for Ishmael, who was living in the neighbourhood, and Isaac and Ishmael buried their father in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham had bought from the Hittite, Ephron







## BEHIND AND BEFORE

### CHAPTER 13

#### BEHIND AND BEFORE

WE have now reached the end of a stage in our journey THROUGH THE BIBLE, and it is time for us to take a look backwards and forwards, before we go farther.

We have caught a glimpse of an old world in which men and women had not cared to live good and pure lives. Violence, cruelty, and greed mingled with kindness and honesty and truth—for we must not think that even those who worshipped idols were altogether bad.

But there came a time when Jehovah chose out the young prince in Ur of the Chaldees, whose name was Abram. Jehovah saw that he could trust Abram to be his servant and His friend, and it pleased Him to found in Abram and his descendants a race which would establish the service of Jehovah in the world. Abraham is now dead, and we are to go forward with his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, before we reach another stopping place in our journey. The coming race was to descend through Isaac, but God also offered blessings to Ishmael, as we have seen.

After Sarah's death, Abraham married Keturah, and she bore him children who in their turn became the fathers of different tribes boasting of their descent from Abraham. As was the custom in those days, Abraham had also sons by slave-women or others, who were not his true wives. To these sons Abraham gave handsome presents and sent them to live in the East countries; but everything else he gave to his heir, Isaac.

But from this time forward we shall constantly hear of Abraham as the father of the race, and Jehovah Himself is sometimes called The God of Abraham.

This is what was written of Abraham over two thousand years later, when the main body of his descendants, the Jews, lived in Palestine, Egypt, the eastern lands, or were scattered throughout the cities of the known world.

"By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place

## BEHIND AND BEFORE

which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

"By faith, he lived in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

"For Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Paul the Apostle, who was descended from Abraham, also wrote in a letter to the Romans:

"Abraham, who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations. . . . Abraham staggereth not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able also to perform."





## Part Two

### CHAPTER I

#### ESAU AND JACOB

**I**SAAC and Rebekah's children were twin boys, and no boys could have been more different.

Esau, the elder, was a strong, noisy boy, keen on sports and hunting. He hated to sit quiet and think, and liked to be doing things. He was bold and generous, but he had a shallow mind, and did not appear to be interested when his father talked of the wonderful "blessings" which Jehovah had promised their grandfather, and which would descend to his heirs. It was Esau, the elder son, who would by right inherit the "blessing."

Jacob, on the other hand, was quiet and thoughtful, and his father's words sank deeply into his mind. How he longed to have been the elder son. Why should Esau inherit a "blessing" which he did not value in the very least?

Now, Jacob had a very bad fault, with which Jehovah had to be

## ESAU AND JACOB

patient. He was undoubtedly mean and unscrupulous in some things, and did not hesitate to lie and to deceive to get his own way. The Bible never excuses Jacob for this fault, and great trouble fell upon him through it.

Now all round Isaac's encampment near the well called Lahai-roi, there was plenty of hunting. Esau was a skilled hunter, but Jacob preferred the quieter life of a shepherd, and he looked after the stock. Esau could find sport amongst lions, bears, leopards, panthers, wolves, and he was useful in bringing home wild roe, to make the savoury venison which his father always enjoyed. He was Isaac's favourite son, but Jacob was Rebekah's.

It happened one evening that Esau returned home after a very hard day in the wild. He was, in fact, tired out, and he staggered forward, scarcely knowing whether each step would be his last. He found Jacob sitting at his tent door, making some kind of soup.

"Feed me, I pray thee!" gasped Esau, as he sank down, "for I am faint!"

A true brother would have helped instantly; but as Jacob looked at the haggard hunter, a burning wish, which he had hidden for years, sprang to flame. Here was his chance to secure the right to be the elder son.

"Sell me thy birthright!" shot out Jacob.

"Behold, I am going to die! What good will my birthright do me?" asked Esau desperately.

But Jacob was in such earnest that he answered, "Swear to me this day!"

So Esau swore to give up his birthright to Jacob, for he did not seem to care about it, and Jacob then fed him with lentils and gave him refreshing drink.

When Esau felt his strength return to him, he rose, and went his way, as though he were not in the least troubled that he had sold his birthright for a good meal. He despised his birthright—until it was too late.

He lived on in his happy careless way, and made friends with the Hittites in the neighbourhood. He even married two Hittite women, and this was a great grief to Isaac and Rebekah, for how could these Hittite mothers teach his children about Jehovah and the blessing that was to come to Abraham's family?

## JACOB DECEIVES HIS FATHER

### CHAPTER 2

#### JACOB DECEIVES HIS FATHER

THE time came when Isaac was growing blind, and he feared that he was going to die. Actually, he did not die for many years afterwards, but he wished to make sure that his elder son Esau should receive his blessing. The father's blessing was very highly prized, and though Esau had actually sold his birthright to Jacob, it is not likely that either he or Jacob had told their father.

So Isaac called Esau to him and said.

"Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death; now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field and hunt me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat, and my soul may bless thee before I die."

Now, Rebekah heard what Isaac said, and her heart was filled with longing that Jacob should get the blessing. So when Esau had gone off on the hunting expedition, Rebekah called Jacob and explained to him that Esau was about to receive Jehovah's blessing from his father.

"Now, therefore, my son," she said, "obey my voice. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth; and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death."

"But," protested Jacob, "behold Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man; my father will peradventure feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing."

"Upon me be thy curse, my son!" she replied. "Only obey my voice."

So Jacob fetched the kids, and Rebekah prepared the savoury meat, and took fine clothes of Esau's for Jacob to wear. She also put skin from the kids on his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck.

In seeking some excuse for Jacob, it is fair to remember that he had been trained to great deference and obedience, and the word

## JACOB DECEIVES HIS FATHER

of his mother was almost as high to him as a law. Yet as the story goes on it grows worse and worse.

"My father!" said Jacob, as he went in to Isaac, carrying the dish of savoury meat.

"Who art thou, my son?"

"I am Esau, thy firstborn. I have done as thou didst tell me. Arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me."

"How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?"

"Because Jehovah, thy God, brought it to me."

"Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not."

And Jacob went near unto his father Isaac; and he felt him, and said doubtfully, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Art thou my very son Esau?"

"I am," said Jacob.

Isaac was satisfied at last. He ate the savoury meat, and drank the wine that Jacob brought him, and afterwards he put out his hands toward Jacob.

"Come near, and kiss me, my son," he said.

So Jacob came near, and his father smelled the scent of his hunter's clothes.

"See the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which Jehovah hath blessed. Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee; cursed be every one that curseth thee; and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

As soon as his father had ceased speaking, Jacob hurried away; for though he had succeeded in winning the blessing, his heart was already beginning to fear what might happen when Esau returned.

So it happened that, shortly afterwards, Esau came in, carrying the savoury dish, the real venison, which he had shot.

"Let my father arise!" he said eagerly, "and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me!"

"Who art thou?" broke from Isaac in a piteous tone.

"I am thy son, thy firstborn, Esau!"

## JACOB DECEIVES HIS FATHER

**Then Isaac trembled with a great trembling.**

**"Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed?"**

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry: "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

"Thy brother came with subtlety and hath taken away thy blessing," said Isaac.

"He is rightly named Jacob, the supplanter!" cried Esau. "He took away my birthright, and behold now he hath taken away my blessing! Hast thou not O my father, reserved a blessing for me?"

"Behold I have made him thy lord, and with corn and wine have I sustained him; and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?"

"Hast thou not one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me, O my father!" and Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

"Behold," said Isaac, "thy dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. And by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy brother, and it shall come to pass . . . that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

So we shall not be surprised that Esau hated Jacob, and in his fury he threatened to kill Jacob as soon as his father was dead. His angry words were repeated to Rebekah, and in great terror she sent for Jacob, and commanded him to go off to Haran to her brother Laban, and stay with him until Esau's anger should have calmed down.

"Why should I lose both of you in one day?" she asked sadly.

But Jacob could not leave home without his father's permission; so Rebekah made the excuse that she was weary of the Hittite women whom Esau had married, and that she wished Jacob to take a wife from her own family.

Isaac agreed, and, calling Jacob, commanded him to set forth to go to Laban.

He gave Jacob yet another blessing; but Jacob left home like a fugitive, and Rebekah received a very bitter punishment for the wrong she had done. She never saw Jacob again.

When Jacob was safely out of the way, Esau decided that he



## JACOB DECEIVES HIS FATHER

would please his father and mother by making another marriage. So he went off to see his father's half-brother, Ishmael, and arranged to marry his daughter, who was named Mahalath.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE GATE OF HEAVEN

MANY years before, when first Abraham had travelled from Haran, he stayed at a place called Bethel, and built an altar to God.

Let us stand on the open hillside near Bethel. It is a lovely night. The stars are shining like diamonds far above us, and even the brilliant moon cannot put out their light. Wait! Look! A man is lying on the ground, wrapped round in his heavy cloak. His head rests on a long-shaped stone, his staff, his food bag, and his water skin lie at his side, and his money is safely clasped beneath his tunic.

We must not disturb him, for he looks worn and tired. He has come a long way—all the way from Beer-sheba—and he has still a long way to go. We are sure that the man is Jacob.

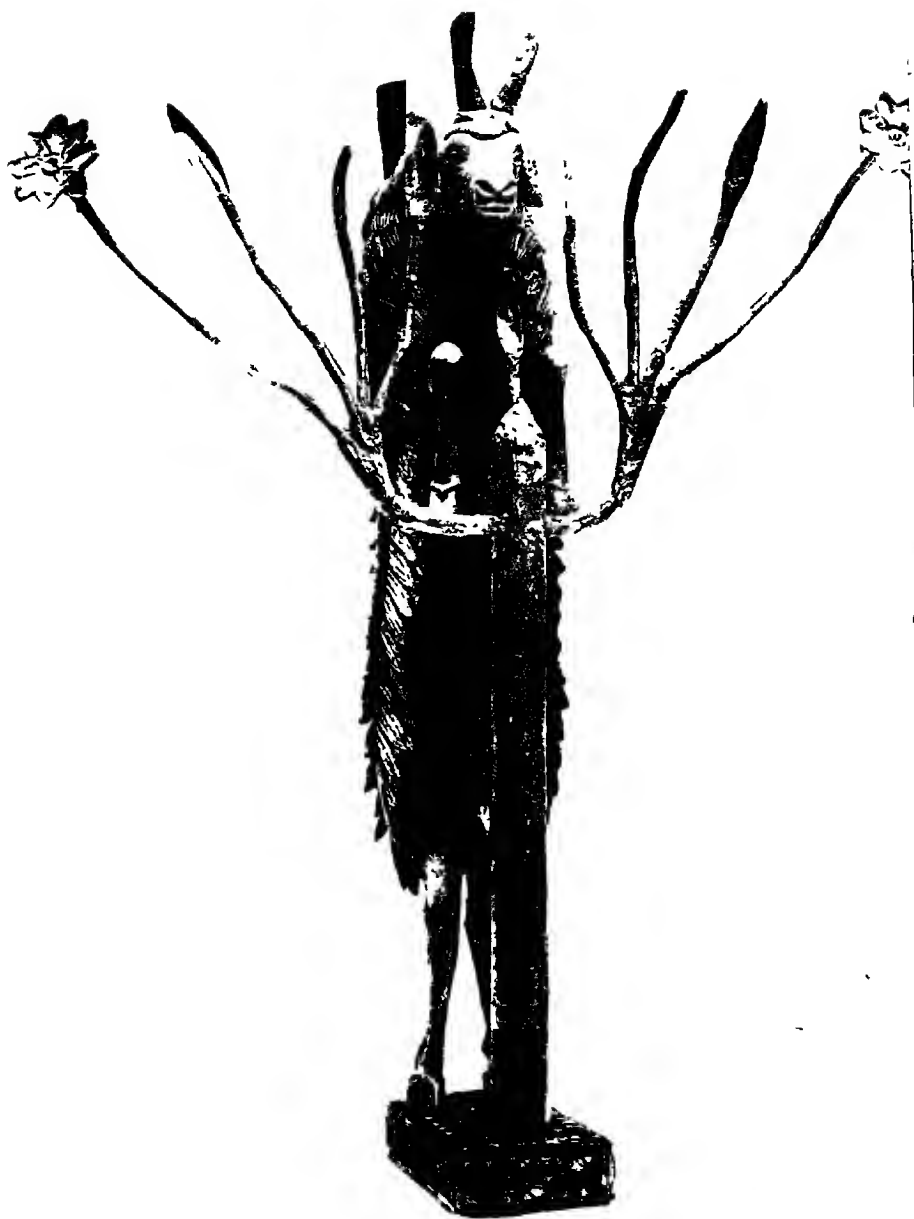
Hush! He is waking. No, he is still asleep. Yet he lifts himself up, and reaches out a hand towards the stars, as though he would touch something very wonderful. Clearly he is dreaming. He sees a winding staircase, reaching from earth to heaven, brilliant with glory. Angels descend and ascend as though earth and heaven were one place. Let us watch still more carefully.

Jacob is listening. Some one is speaking to him.

"I am Jehovah, God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, east, north, and south, and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

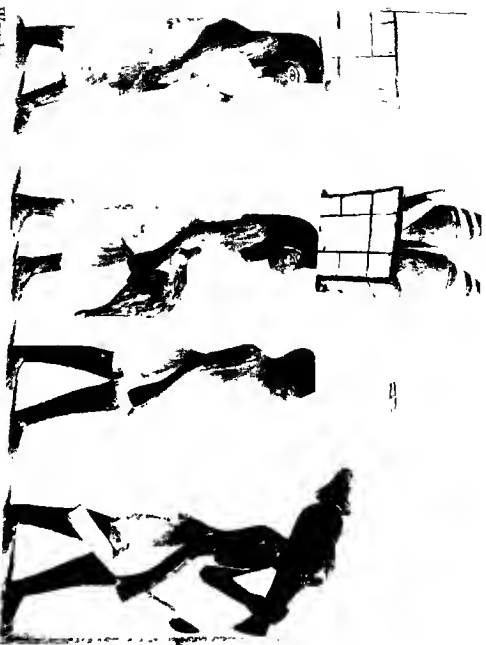
Now we remember that these words are something like the words which Jehovah spoke to Abraham.

But the vision is not over. The voice still speaks, and the words are so beautiful that they bring joy to the sleeper's face.



"A ram caught in a thicket"—a  
golden model found at Ur.

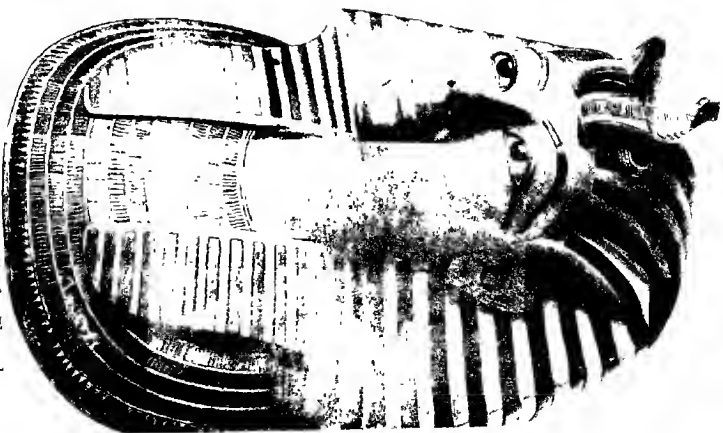
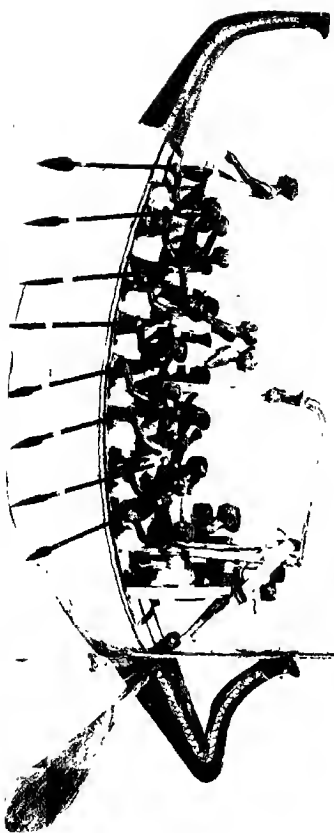
# LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT



Worshippers carrying of-  
ferings to be sacrificed to  
their gods.

MODELS FOUND IN THE  
TOMBS OF THE PHARAOHS

A Nile boat



A golden model of the head of a Pharaoh.



An evil beast hath devoured him!"—lions  
 will roam the fringes of the desert, an  
 ever-present menace, and——



——though here, at a  
 very early age, the jackal  
 does not look seriously  
 alarming, he, too, will  
 grow up into a real  
 danger to the flocks

## THE GATE OF HEAVEN

"Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Jacob rose up, wide awake, and stared about him. He was full of fear, as he exclaimed: "Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I knew it not!" Then he trembled and covered his face with his hands. "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Jacob slept again, and at dawn he rose, set up the stone he had used as a pillow, and poured oil upon it, as an offering to Jehovah, and left it standing there upright, as a pillar.

Bethel means "The house of God." We must remember Bethel, for we shall come to this place again.

## CHAPTER

### JACOB AND HIS UNCLE LABAN

JACOB hurried northwards, ever in fear of his brother Esau, and at last he arrived at Haran, the old home of his grandfather, Abraham, and of his mother Rebekah. He at once noticed a well in the field, with a great stone laid upon the well's mouth, and three flocks of sheep were lying resting, waiting to be watered. Jacob asked the shepherds whether they knew a man named Laban, and they said they did, and added: "Behold Rachel, his daughter, cometh with the sheep."

The young girl was little more than a child, perhaps ten years old, for in that country, no girl older than ten was allowed to go out alone. Remember that when Rebekah met Isaac, she had a crowd of women as her companions. Jacob was filled with happiness when he saw this charming and bright-eyed cousin.

The shepherds had told Jacob that the stone must not be rolled from the well until all the flocks were gathered. But Jacob could not wait. He rolled away the stone, and watered the flock of Laban, his mother's brother. Rachel must have watched this stranger from the south in great surprise, and the more so when he kissed her, and then lifted up his voice and wept.

## JACOB AND HIS UNCLE LABAN

Jacob explained that Rachel's father was his uncle, and that she was his own cousin, for he was her aunt Rebekah's son.

Rachel hurried off to tell her father this startling news, and Laban ran back to the field, and, flinging his arms about Jacob, kissed him, and then brought him to the house.

For a month, Jacob stayed on, and he soon made himself useful to his uncle, for he knew a great deal about flocks and herds. At the end of that time, however, Laban asked him what wages he wanted, for he did not wish him to work for him for nothing.

Now, Jacob had made up his mind that when Rachel was old enough he would like her as his bride, for he had already begun to love her very tenderly. It was usual to give the parents a very handsome present when asking for a daughter in marriage; as Jacob had no present to offer, however, he suggested that he should work for Laban for nothing for seven years, in order to win Rachel as his wife. Laban saw at once that this was a good bargain for him, and he agreed, and Jacob toiled for seven years in his uncle's service, and the years seemed but a few days, because of the great love he had for Rachel.

A great wedding feast was prepared, and Jacob was full of joy—but, alas, Laban cheated Jacob, and would not let him have Rachel, but forced the older sister, Leah, upon him as the bride!

Poor Jacob was in despair, and was bitterly angry. But his uncle explained that the younger daughter must never be given in marriage before the first born. However, he said, if Jacob would work for him for another seven years, he should have Rachel as well as Leah.

So Jacob, who had cheated his father, was cheated himself.

Presently, then, he had two wives, Rachel and Leah; and he loved Rachel with a great love, but he hated Leah.

## CHAPTER 5

### JACOB AND ESAU MAKE FRIENDS

JACOB spent twenty years with his uncle, Laban, but he was often very unhappy. The work was hard, and Laban cheated Jacob, and

## JACOB AND ESAU MAKE FRIENDS

Jacob cheated Laban in return, and there was little peace and contentment.

Shepherding was not an easy task in that country, was, indeed, often dangerous and difficult. The sheep had to be watched and defended from enemies, night and day. The days were often blazing hot, and the nights were bitterly frosty. There were lions, leopards, panthers, wolves, and sometimes human robbers, with which the shepherds had to contend.

During this time Jacob had eleven sons and we must remembered their names, as we shall hear of them, as heads of tribes, over and over again. Leah was the mother of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon. Leah's slave was the mother of Gad and Asher. Rachel's slave was the mother of Dan and Naphtali, and his favourite wife, Rachel, was the mother of Joseph. Rachel bore another son later, whose name was Benjamin.

At the end of twenty years Jacob could not endure life with his uncle any longer, and he decided to return to his father Isaac, who was still alive. Laban had gone away to shear his sheep, so Jacob took the chance of setting his wives upon camels, with the younger boys and girls, and having collected the sheep and cattle which belonged to him, he stole away.

Jacob did not take the route which Abraham had travelled, but passed down the east side of the river Jordan. It was not told Laban until the third day that Jacob had fled. He collected a party, and they went in pursuit, and caught them up in about seven days, near Mount Gilead. But that night, God spoke to Laban in a dream and told him that he must on no account do harm to Jacob. On the following day, uncle and nephew met, and Laban poured out his complaint.

"What hast thou done?" he asked, "that thou hast stolen away unawares to me and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword? Why didst thou flee away secretly? Why didst thou not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret and with harp? Thou hast not allowed me to kiss farewell to my sons and daughters. Thou hast now done very foolishly, and it is in my power to do you hurt."

Laban had a further grievance, for he accused Jacob of having

## JACOB AND ESAU MAKE FRIENDS

stolen the family god or image. But Jacob assured his uncle that he was quite innocent of any such theft. For he did not know that Rachel had stolen the image and hidden it.

Now it was Jacob's turn to make his complaint.

"These twenty years have I been with thee. I have lost none of the lambs, and I have not eaten any of the rams. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee. I bare the loss of it myself, for thou didst require it, whether stolen by day or by night. I endured the drought by day, the frost by night. I served thee fourteen years for thy daughters, and six for my share of thy sheep and cattle, and thou hast changed my wages ten times."

In the end, Laban and Jacob made friends, and set up a great stone as a witness between them, and called it Mizpah.

On the following morning, Laban kissed his daughters and his grandchildren, and then turned back to return to Haran, while Jacob prepared to go south-west to Beer-sheba. But now, a new dread was filling Jacob's heart. Having chosen this route he would have to pass through the country of Edom, where his brother Esau was living as a great prince or chieftain. Suppose Esau heard of his caravan! Suppose he took revenge by slaughtering them all in their helplessness?

In spite of his faults, Jacob did long to serve Jehovah, and we may be sure that in the lonely nights guarding the sheep he thought over the past days of boyhood, when he and Esau had played together. He had treated Esau badly, and he had had twenty years of punishment. Yet there was fine stuff still in Jacob, as there is in any one who has done wrong and who is sorry and seeks to do better. He decided that he would not wait for Esau to attack him, but would send such a humble message that Esau would guess that he was sorry for the past, and wished to recognise his brother as his lord.

Jacob sent forward servants, with instructions that they must call Esau "my lord," and call their master "servant," and they were to speak as follows:

"Thy servant, Jacob, has been staying with Laban, our uncle for twenty years, and has oxen and asses, flocks and herds, men-slaves and women-slaves, and I have sent to tell my lord, that he may be friendly with me."



## JACOB AND ESAU MAKE FRIENDS

But the messengers returned with bad news. Esau was advancing with all speed, with a company of four hundred armed men. Jacob was now in deep terror and distress, for he had no means whatever of protecting his wives and children, his flocks and his slaves, from armed men.

In his extremity, Jacob kneeled before Jehovah, and confessed that he was not worthy of his blessing.

"O God of my father Abraham," he cried, "deliver me from the hand of my brother, for I fear him, lest he come and smite me and the mothers with the children. Thou didst promise, 'I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea.'"

Jacob now arranged a great present for Esau. He chose out two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty camels with their colts, forty cows, ten bulls, and twenty asses with their foals. He commanded his servants to divide them into three droves, and to put a space between each drove.

"When Esau, my brother, meeteth thee," so he told the first drover, "and asks you who you are, say that you are bringing a present to my lord Esau, from his servant Jacob who is following behind." Then he instructed the second and the third drovers to say the same.

Now something happened to Jacob that night, which no one really understands, but which changed his name from Jacob to Israel.

As the darkness grew, he took his wives and the children across the stream Jabbok, which we can see on the map. (We are not sure of the exact sites of many places in the Bible, but rivers and streams and mountains remain, and a tourist to-day can stand by this very "Brook Jabbok.") Jacob remained alone on the Haran side of the brook that night, and the Bible tells us that a "man," who refused to give his name, wrestled with Jacob until the break of day. It was a long night struggle in the darkness, and Jacob refused to give in, until the "man" touched the hollow of his thigh. Instantly Jacob felt a sudden strain, as his sinew shrank, and at last the "man" spoke.

## JACOB AND ESAU MAKE FRIENDS

"Let me go for the day breaketh!"

But Jacob had a strange feeling that he had, all through the darkness, been wrestling with Jehovah.

"I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me!" he cried.

"What is thy name?" came the answer.

"Jacob is my name."

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince thou hast power with God."

"Tell me," pleaded Jacob, "Thy name!" though indeed he guessed.

Jehovah would not tell Jacob His name. Yet He blessed him, and as the sun rose Jacob looked round and found that he was alone.

"I shall call the name of this place Peniel," he thought (Peniel means "The face of God"), "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Jacob might have thought that the strange experience was just a dream, but when he tried to walk he found that he was lame—and, indeed, he was lame for the rest of his life.

But almost immediately Jacob noticed that in the distance a great host was advancing. Esau was in sight! Crossing brook Jabbok, he put his wives and children behind him and went forward bowing himself seven times, as a mark of great respect. But when he came up quite near, hardly daring to raise his head, suddenly all fear fled.

Esau ran to meet him, fell on his neck, put his arms about him and kissed him passionately. In that kiss the old quarrel died, and the men, remembering that they were, after all, twin brothers, burst into tears. We can imagine the amazement of the women and the children, who had not known from moment to moment whether they were to be slaughtered by the armed men standing behind Esau!

"Who are these?" asked Esau.

"These are the children which Jehovah has so graciously given to thy servant," said Jacob.

Then the wives and the children came near, and all bowed low, and Rachel and the little boy Joseph came last of all.

"What is the meaning of those three droves I met?" asked Esau.

## JACOB AND ESAU MAKE FRIENDS

"These are to find grace in the sight of my lord," said Jacob.

At first Esau would not take the present, but in the end Jacob persuaded him to do so.

Esau offered to protect Jacob during the remainder of his journey, and to travel with him; but Jacob explained that he could only go very slowly because of the children, and that if the flocks were overdriven, even for a day, they would die.

So the brothers parted good friends, and at last Jacob arrived at Hebron, where he found his aged father.

We can only guess as to what happened at that meeting, but we can understand how sad Jacob must have been when he heard that his mother was already buried in the family grave at Machpelah. Isaac himself died shortly afterwards, and Esau came riding over from Edom, and together the brothers united in arranging a great funeral in honour of their father.

## CHAPTER 6

### JOSEPH

JACOB was now living at Hebron, as a great chief, for he was very rich in sheep and cattle, and as his sons grew up, he put the care of the stock into their hands. His favourite wife, Rachel, was dead, and Joseph, who may have been about seventeen, had a younger brother, Benjamin, of whom he was very fond.

Jacob, very foolishly, made it clear to every one that Joseph was his favourite son, and this favouritism made the others hate their brother, and they could not speak peaceably to him. Jacob even distinguished Joseph by making him a special coat. An ordinary shepherd would wear a short, sleeveless shirt, with a leather girdle, and sometimes a long cloak of camel's hair or tanned sheepskin. His head would be covered with a light cloth, bound with a cord, which he would draw across his face as a protection from dust or sand. He might also wear a short jacket. But Joseph's coat would have long sleeves, and would nearly touch the ground, and be made of fine linen or striped silk, gay and distinguished.

No wonder the brothers were jealous; and Joseph made things

## JOSEPH

worse, for being a sharp and intelligent boy, he noticed many wrong things which his brothers did, and actually was so foolish as to carry tales of his brothers' doings to his father.

It happened that Joseph dreamed two dreams, which he told his brothers, and they hated him all the more.

"Behold," said Joseph, "we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf."

The second dream was even more aggravating.

"Behold I have dreamed a dream," said Joseph, "and behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me."

Even Jacob rebuked his son and said:

"What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?"

So the brothers envied him; but Jacob thought over the dream, wondering perhaps whether it had been sent by Jehovah.

One day the brothers were away with the flocks at Shechem, and Israel (or Jacob) called Joseph to him.

"Go, I pray thee," he said, "and see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks, and bring me word again."

So Joseph set forth; and as he reached Shechem he could see no sign of his brothers.

"What seekest thou?" asked a friendly stranger, noticing Joseph wandering about.

"I seek my brethren," replied Joseph; "tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks."

"They are departed hence," said the man, "and I heard them say: 'Let us go to Dothan.'"

So Joseph went on until he reached the top of a hill which looked down towards Dothan.

Yes, there were the flocks in the distance, with the shepherd encampment, and Joseph was very glad. But as he hurried down the hillside, his brothers saw him—travellers tell us that an Arab to-day can often see farther than an ordinary man with a field glass—and even before he came near to them, they conspired against him to slay him.

"Behold this dreamer cometh!" they mocked; "come now,





## JOSEPH

therefore, and let us slay him and cast him into some pit; and we will say: 'An evil beast hath devoured him!' and we shall see what will become of his dreams!"

But Reuben, the eldest brother, thought in his mind that he would somehow manage to rescue Joseph and deliver him to his father again.

Joseph arrived, hot and eager, but before he had even time to deliver his father's message, they seized him, and stripped him of his coat; and though he pleaded for mercy, they flung him into a pit with sloping sides, such as shepherds dig to catch rain water. But there was no water in this pit, and so the blazing sun beat down upon the boy.

The story is not quite clear here, but it appears that while Reuben was away, a company of merchants, Ishmaelites, came along from Gilead, with their camels, bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, which they were taking southwards to Egypt. Here was an excellent chance of getting rid of Joseph, without having to kill him. So they drew the boy out of the pit and, in spite of his pleadings, sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and he was carried off as a slave.

Now, when Reuben returned he looked down into the pit, to see that his brother was still safe: and when he found the pit empty, he rent his clothes, a sign of great grief, and looked round him distractedly.

"The child is not!" he cried; "and I—whither shall I go?"

The brothers calmed him, assuring him that Joseph was **not** dead; and then they consulted together to make a plan for deceiving their father.

They took Joseph's coat, and having killed a kid, dipped the coat in the blood. Then they went back to their father, full of anxiety, and seeking to make up the best story they could to cover up their crime. Clearly, if they had told Jacob the truth, he was rich enough to have sent to Egypt to buy back his boy from slavery. Jacob must have been surprised when he saw all the encampment returning, and yet where was Joseph?

"We have found this coat," said one of them, not to waste time; "thou wilt know whether it is thy son's coat or not?"

But Jacob knew the coat instantly, and cried out, "It is my

## JOSEPH

son's coat! An evil beast hath devoured him! Joseph is without doubt, rent in pieces!"

What could they say? They could only watch, as their father rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon himself, and mourned for his son many days.

All his sons and daughters rose up to comfort Jacob, but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "I will go down into the grave for my son mourning!"

Thus his father wept for him.

The brothers certainly seemed to have got rid of Joseph, and they had to hear no more of his dreams—but they had forgotten Jehovah!

## CHAPTER 7

### JOSEPH THE SLAVE

THE merchants were delighted to have secured such a fine, handsome boy, whom they could sell for a good price in Egypt.

They probably followed the caravan route along the Way of Shur, and when at last they arrived in Egypt, this boy from the Hebron hills must have been amazed at what he saw. He was actually in Egypt, one of the mighty empires of the world. Here were temples, pyramids, tombs, strange paintings on the walls, chariots and horses, and the people speaking a language he could not understand. How anxiously he must have watched and tried to make out what was to happen to him, as the merchants bargained. But at last he found himself taken to a magnificent palace, owned by a man whose name was Potiphar, a rich officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

Joseph was brave and able, and instead of moping and despairing, he set himself to be a good slave and to serve his master well. He tried to strengthen his lonely heart by remembering what his father had told him of Jehovah, the God of his grandfather, Abraham, and he was confident that God would be with him in Egypt.



## JOSEPH THE SLAVE

We are told that Jehovah *was* with Joseph, and that he became a prosperous man. Potiphar noticed that this young Hebrew was different from the other slaves. He was diligent, painstaking, and completely honest. So when Joseph grew older, Potiphar made him his steward and left everything in his hands.

But at last a time of great testing came. Potiphar's wife took a spite against Joseph, accused him to his master, and he was cast into prison. It was a terrible blow, to come down from being the chief of a rich man's household, to being a prisoner in chains.

But the chains did not last long, for Joseph's character and his trust in Jehovah again helped him. The gaoler probably knew that he was innocent of any crime, and he soon began to trust Joseph and to put other prisoners under his charge. Indeed, he left almost everything in the prison under Joseph's management.

We can guess that Joseph, a prisoner himself, was as kind to the other prisoners as he was allowed to be; and one day he discovered that two prisoners, who had only been there a short time, were looking very miserable. They were important men, for one was Pharaoh's chief butler, and the other was his chief baker.

"Why do you look so sad to-day?" asked Joseph kindly.

"We have dreamed a dream," they replied, "and there is no one here who can interpret for us, and tell us what it means."

"The interpretation of dreams belongs to Jehovah," said Joseph; "but tell me the dreams."

"In my dream," said the chief butler, "behold a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches; and it was as though it budded and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

"The three branches," said Joseph, "mean three days. Within three days shall Pharaoh restore thee unto thy place, and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the manner when thou wast his butler. But remember me, when it shall be well with thee, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this prison. For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here I have done nothing amiss that they should put me into the dungeon."

## JOSEPH THE SLAVE

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he also told his dream.

"Behold I had three layers of baskets on my head, filled with fine cakes for Pharaoh, when the birds flew down and did eat from the top basket."

Joseph must have looked sadly at the baker as he told the meaning of this dream.

"The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh shall hang thee on a tree, and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee."

And so it happened.

On the third day it was Pharaoh's birthday, and he made a feast for his servants. He restored the chief butler to his place, but he commanded the chief baker to be hanged.

Alas, the chief butler forgot all about Joseph, and Joseph waited and waited in the dreary prison for about two years, hoping that the order for his release might come, and still full of faith that Jehovah his God would help him.

## CHAPTER 8

### JOSEPH THE GOVERNOR

ONE night Pharaoh himself dreamed strangely and, as was the custom, called together his magicians and wise men and told them his dreams; but none of them could tell him what the dreams meant.

Then suddenly the butler remembered about Joseph, and told his master about him, and instantly Pharaoh sent for him from the prison. This was a great excitement for Joseph, and the kindly gaoler was glad to bring him the news, and to see that he was washed, shaved, and clothed fit to go into Pharaoh's presence.

We can imagine Joseph standing before Pharaoh, in the presence of the court, the magicians, the wise men, the councillors, and the slaves.

## JOSEPH THE GOVERNOR

"I have heard it said," explained Pharaoh, "that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."

But Joseph answered modestly, "It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

"In my dream," said the Pharaoh, "behold I stood upon the bank of the river; and behold there came up out of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed and well-favoured, and they fed in the meadow. And behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill-favoured and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness. And the lean and the ill-favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine. And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill-favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

"And I saw in my dream, and behold seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good. And behold seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them; and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears. I have told these dreams unto the magicians, but they do not know the meaning."

We are sure that Joseph must have been praying to Jehovah to tell him the meaning of the dreams, and he now spoke with perfect confidence:

"The dream of Pharaoh is one. Jehovah has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years.

"And the seven thin and ill-favoured kine that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears, blasted with the east wind, shall be seven years of famine.

"Behold there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, and there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten, and the famine shall consume the land, for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

Then, as Pharaoh listened thoughtfully, and seemed to respect this young Hebrew, Joseph added, "Now, therefore, let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise and set him over the land of Egypt. Let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the Land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

## JOSEPH THE GOVERNOR

**Let them gather the food of the good years, and lay up the corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities, so that the land perish not through the famine."**

Pharaoh and his servants listened in amazement, and as the speaker had shown such sense and power, they felt that what he now advised was good.

"Can we find any one better than this man?" asked Pharaoh to those standing about his throne. "The Spirit of God is in him.

"Forasmuch," he said to Joseph, "as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled, only in the throne will I be greater than thou. See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt."

Pharaoh took off his ring, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and this meant that Joseph could dictate decrees, ink his ring, make the impression on the papyrus—and the decree would become law! He was clothed in the finest linen, and a gold chain was put about his neck. He was given the second chariot in the land, and slaves were ordered to run before him, crying out to the people to do him honour.

"I am Pharaoh!" said Joseph's new master; "and without thee, no man shall lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to Zaphnath-paaneah, meaning a "saviour of life," and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of the Priest of On, as his wife.

For the next seven years Joseph worked hard at the task which had been set. He travelled throughout Egypt, seeing where the richest harvests were to be found, ordering store-houses to be built, and making sure that the corn was stored carefully. In every city he laid up corn round about it, and at last so much was stored that it was impossible either to weigh it or to calculate the quantity. For Joseph never forgot the seven years of famine which were coming, and he knew that he could not have one grain too much, if the people were to be saved alive.

During these years two boys were born to him. He called one Manasseh, which meant that God had made him forget his troubles, and the other he called Ephraim, which meant that God had blessed him in the land in which he had been enslaved.

## JOSEPH THE GOVERNOR

But at last the years of plenty ended. The dearth came to all the lands round about, and only in Egypt was there bread. When the people were famishing, they cried to Pharaoh, but his answer was:

“Go unto Joseph. What he saith to you, do.”

So Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold corn to the people, and from all countries the people came to buy the corn.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE STRANGERS FROM CANAAN

FAR away in Hebron, Jacob's sons talked together, and looked at one another despairingly. For the famine was all around them, and they wondered what they could do to save themselves, their wives and children, their slaves and their cattle.

“Why do ye look one upon another?” Jacob asked his troubled sons. “Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live and not die.”

So Jacob's ten sons set off for Egypt, but Jacob would not allow them to take Benjamin, in case any accident should happen to him.

The great Egyptian Governor had critical work on hand. It was no light task to keep a starving nation in order, and to save the people from unnecessary suffering.

In the market centre, not only Egyptians but men from other nations were thronging and clamouring to buy corn. Who are those ten men in the well-remembered dress of Hebrew shepherds?

Instantly Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him, as they bowed down with their faces to the earth. Joseph made himself as a stranger to them, and spoke to them harshly. “Whence come ye?” he demanded.

“From the land of Canaan, to buy food,” they answered respectfully.

Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed of them, and he determined to test them.

## THE STRANGERS FROM CANAAN

"Ye are spies!" he said; "to see the nakedness of the land are ye come!"

"Nay, my lord," they answered humbly, "but to buy corn are we come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men; thy servants are no spies."

"Nay," said the Governor, "but to see the nakedness of the land are ye come!"

"Thy servants are twelve brethren," they protested, "the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold the youngest is this day with our father, and one of them is dead."

"Then by the life of Pharaoh," cried the Governor, "hereby ye shall be proved. Ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison that your words may be proved, or else—by the life of Pharaoh—surely ye are spies!"

So the brothers were imprisoned together for three days, and then the Governor came and visited them

"I fear God," he said more gently, "so if ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound and remain in this prison, while ye go, and carry corn for the famine that is in your houses. But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified and ye shall not die."

The brothers agreed, but they spoke together anxiously in the Hebrew language, not knowing that Joseph could understand what they were saying, for the great Egyptian Governor had spoken to them in Egyptian through an interpreter.

"We are verily guilty concerning our brother Joseph, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he pleaded with us to spare him, and we would not hear. Therefore this distress is come upon us." And Reuben said, "Did I not speak to you all saying, 'Do not sin against the child,' and ye would not hear?"

Joseph felt heart-broken as he heard these words, and hurried out of their sight that he might weep in private. When he returned he chose out Simeon as the hostage, and commanded him to be bound before their eyes. But he gave a secret command to his servants, that all the money these men had paid for the corn should be returned, and placed in the top of each corn sack.

The brothers set forth, thankful to have secured the corn, but







## THE STRANGERS FROM CANAAN

very anxious about Simeon and what their father would have to say about Benjamin. But when one of them opened a sack to give his ass a feed, he found his money lying in the sack's mouth. This filled them all with terror, for they were afraid that this was a trick of the Governor, to bring an accusation of theft against them when next they returned.

"This is what God has done unto us," said one of them.

After a long journey they returned to Jacob, and told him the story of what had happened to them.

"The man who is lord of the land spake roughly to us," they said, "and took us for spies; and we told him that we were no spies, but the sons of one father, that one of us was dead and the other had remained in Canaan. He has kept Simeon in Egypt, and he has commanded us to bring with us our youngest brother, to prove that we are true men."

But when they opened the sacks, they found that all the money they had taken to pay for the corn had been returned, and both they and their father were greatly afraid.

The aged father broke down in a passion of grief.

"Me, have ye bereaved of my children Joseph is dead, and Simeon is gone, and now ye will take Benjamin away! All these things are against me!"

Reuben tried to pacify him, and said, "Slay my two sons, if I bring not Benjamin safely back!"

Jacob shook his head, and declared, "My son shall not go down with you. For his brother is dead, and he is left alone; if mischief befall, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

But the famine continued sore in the land, and when they had eaten all the corn they had bought in Egypt, Jacob told his sons to go and buy more.

Judah answered respectfully, "The Governor did solemnly protest unto us, 'Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.' If thou wilt send our brother we will then go and buy food."

"Wherefore have ye done so ill by me?" moaned Jacob. "Why did ye tell the man that ye had a brother?"

Again they explained, and at last Judah persuaded his father, and promised that he would be surety for Benjamin.

## THE STRANGERS FROM CANAAN

"Except we had lingered," he urged, "we should have returned this second time."

Then Jacob, or Israel as we must now call him, agreed, for indeed they were all in a desperate plight. He ordered his sons to take fruit, balm, spices, honey, myrrh, nuts, and almonds as a present to the great Governor, and to take double money in their hands.

"Take also your brother," he said, "and arise and go again unto the man; and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin. If I am to be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

So the men took the present, and double money in their hands, and their youngest brother Benjamin, and they went down into Egypt and stood before Joseph.

## CHAPTER 10

### JUDAH PLEADS FOR BENJAMIN

Now, when Joseph the Governor, as he stood in the market place, saw the Hebrew shepherds, and noticed that Benjamin was with them, his heart leaped with gladness, and he called to the ruler of his house, and said, "Bring these men to my house, and prepare a feast, for they shall eat with me at noon."

So the brothers were indeed filled with a new dread, as they found themselves taken to the Governor's house. They spoke earnestly to Joseph's steward, anxious to make it clear about the returned money, for they were afraid that they were all going to be taken into slavery.

"O sir," they said, "we came indeed down at the first time to buy food."

They explained about finding the money, and how they had brought it again, with more money for their second purchase.

"We cannot tell who put our money in our sacks!" they said.

But the steward, who must have learned about God from his master, answered kindly, "Peace be to you! Fear not; your God

## JUDAH PLEADS FOR BENJAMIN

and the God of your father hath given you treasure in your sacks. Your money came from me!"

Then he brought Simeon out to them, and he gave them water to wash their feet, and had the asses fed. So they waited until noon, when the Governor entered.

They bowed themselves down, and offered the present, and then, to their amazement, he asked them as to their own welfare, and added, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he alive?"

"Thy servant, our father, is in good health; he is yet alive!" they answered, and again they bowed to the ground.

But Joseph looked towards Benjamin, and he said, "Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? God be gracious unto thee, my son!"

Joseph dared not stay a moment longer in the room. He rushed away to his own chamber and broke into weeping. But presently he washed his face and went out, and told the servants to set the meal.

The table for the brothers was set apart, for no Egyptian would eat bread with a Hebrew; but the brothers were amazed to notice that their places were set in the order of their birth. When special portions were sent from the Governor's table, they noticed that Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they ate and drank in Joseph's company, and their fear grew less and less.

And now Joseph was to make his last test. He commanded his steward to return again the money in the sacks, and to put his own personal silver cup into the mouth of the sack of the youngest. So the steward did as he was commanded, and next morning, as soon as it was light, the brothers set off, thankful to be going safely out of Egypt, with their brother Benjamin with them.

Scarcely had they reached the outskirts of the city, however, when they found themselves overtaken by the Governor's steward, who accused them of having stolen a valuable silver cup which was very precious to his master. In vain they protested their innocence, and agreed to return to be bondmen if a cup was found, and that he with whom such a cup should be found must die.

So they took down their sacks from the asses for the search, and

## JUDAH PLEADS FOR BENJAMIN

the steward found the cup in Benjamin's sack. They rent their clothes in despair, and returned to Joseph's house, and fell before him on the ground.

"What is this that ye have done?" demanded Joseph.

It was Judah who took it upon him to speak, for it was he who had taken Benjamin's safety upon him.

"What shall we say unto my lord," he said, "or how shall we clear ourselves? God has discovered the sin of thy servants, so behold now, we are thy bondmen, both we and he with whom the cup is found."

"God forbid that I should do so!" said the Governor. "But the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my bondman, and as for you, get you up in peace to your father."

Then Judah went forward, and said, "Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ear, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant, for thou art as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have ye a father, or a brother?' and we said unto my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.'

"And thou saidst unto thy servants, 'Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.' And we said unto my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die.'

"And thou saidst, 'Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more'

"And it came to pass, when we came unto thy servant, my father, we told him the words of my lord.

"And our father said, 'Go again and buy us a little food.'

"And we said, 'We cannot go down, if our youngest brother be not with us.'

"And thy servant, our father, said to us, 'Ye know that my wife bare me two sons, and the one went out from me, and I said, 'Surely he is torn in pieces,' and I saw him not since; and if ye take this son also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.' Now, therefore, when I return to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life, it shall come to pass

## JUDAH PLEADS FOR BENJAMIN

that he will die. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto his father, saying, 'If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.'

"Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant stay behind instead of the lad, as a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me, lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father?"

And as Judah ceased speaking, Joseph could not hold himself in any longer, and he commanded every servant to leave the room, so that he might be alone with his brethren.

He wept aloud, and the brothers waited in amazement.

"I am Joseph!" he cried. "Come near to me, I pray you!" and they came near, though they were greatly troubled.

"I am Joseph," he repeated, "whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me in advance of you, to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land, and yet there are five more years, in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest.

"God sent me to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me hither but God; and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

"Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, 'Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks and thy herds and all that thou hast.' Your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither."

Then Joseph fell upon Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brothers, and wept upon them, and afterwards his brethren talked with him.

Pharaoh was very pleased to hear that Joseph's brothers had come, and he said to Joseph, "Say unto your brethren, this do ye.

## JUDAH PLEADS FOR BENJAMIN

Lade your beasts, and go and get you into the land of Canaan, and take your father and your households, and come unto me; and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Take you wagons for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come."

So it came about that Joseph sent his brothers away with handsome presents and a special gift to Benjamin.

And his last word to them as they went was a word of warning:

"See that ye fall not out with one another by the way!"

## CHAPTER II

### THE MEETING

No wonder that at first, when the brothers returned, their father, Israel, did not believe their story.

"Joseph is alive," they said, "and he is Governor over all the land of Egypt!"

Israel's heart fainted, and he could not believe. Yet when they told their full story, and brought him out to see the wagons which Joseph had sent, his spirit revived.

"It is enough," he said. "My son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."

At Beer-sheba, Israel offered a sacrifice to the God of his father, Isaac, and in the night God spoke to him in a dream:

"Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again, and it is thy son Joseph who shall be with thee when thou diest."

So the long wearisome journey started, and the sons of Israel took their father, and their wives and their little ones, in the wagons which Pharaoh had provided. There were seventy persons altogether, and when the news reached the Governor that the travellers had arrived in Goshen, Joseph ordered his chariot, and drove off to meet his father.

## THE MEETING

With what happiness he greeted his aged father, and he fell on his neck, and wept for a long time.

"Let me now die," said Israel, "since I have seen thy face, and know that thou art alive!"

Joseph at once told Pharaoh that his own people had arrived in the land of Goshen, and he took five of his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. He instructed them to make no secret of their being shepherds, but warned them that shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians, and that he was therefore arranging for them to live apart in Goshen.

So when Pharaoh saw the brothers, he said, "What is your occupation?"

"Thy servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers. To live in this land we are come, for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is sore in Canaan. Now, therefore, we pray thee let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

Then Pharaoh turned to Joseph and said, "The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell, and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle."

As Pharaoh was so gracious, Joseph brought his aged father to the court, and Israel gave Pharaoh a blessing.

Thus it came about that the Children of Israel settled down in Goshen, and Joseph still remained Governor during the next years of terrible famine.

When the people's money was all spent for corn, they brought their cattle and horses and asses in exchange. When these failed, he gave them corn in exchange for their land, so that it became Pharaoh's; and Joseph said to the Egyptians, "Behold, I have bought you this day, and your land for Pharaoh; lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field and for your food, for the food of your households and of your little ones."

The people agreed readily to the Governor, and answered him, "Thou hast saved our lives; let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."

At last the time came when Israel must die, and his sons

## THE MEETING

gathered about him, and he gave them his last words. He charged them, however, not to bury him in Egypt, but to carry his body back to Canaan, and lay it in the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were buried.

It was a bitter grief to Joseph when his father died, and he commanded the physicians to embalm the body, as was the custom in Egypt, so that it might be laid in a coffin, and there was a public mourning for seventy days for the Governor's father. But when the mourning was over, Joseph told Pharaoh of his father's charge, and Pharaoh said readily enough, "Go up and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear."

So it came about that a funeral procession wound its way to Canaan, and the Bible tells us that "it was a very great company" Israel was buried in all honour, and Joseph and the company returned to Egypt.

Here is one last story of the brothers. On their return to Egypt they began to have fear lest, now that their father was dead, Joseph would turn round on them and treat them revengefully, because of what they had done to him.

So they came to Joseph, and gave him a message which they said their father had sent (whether Israel had sent the message, we do not know, but probably the brothers had made it up):

"Forgive, I pray thee, now the trespass of thy brethren and their sin; for they did unto thee evil, and now we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father."

Joseph was deeply hurt at such a doubt of his good intentions, and he spoke yet again in kindness:

"Fear not; for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear not; I will nourish you and your little ones."

When the time came for Joseph to die, he said to the leaders of the Israelites in Goshen, "I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which He swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And ye shall carry up my bones from here into Canaan."

So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten, and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.









## Part Three

### CHAPTER I

#### MOSES

**F**OR about three hundred years from the death of Joseph, there is no Bible record of what happened to the Children of Israel in Egypt. We know that the brothers all died, and the following generations, and that the Israelites, or Hebrews as they were still called by the Egyptians, increased greatly in numbers and lived on in the land of Goshen.

It is fortunate that the Egyptians knew the art of writing and of drawing pictures on the stones of their temples, palaces, buildings, statues, and monuments; but it is unfortunate for us that conquering kings liked to cut away the writings and pictures which gave praise and glory to the nations they had conquered.

As these buildings fell to ruins, the stones were used for bridge-building and other purposes, and the masons usually cut away the inscriptions. Very valuable history has thus been lost, and many a historical secret still lies buried under Egyptian villages which have been built on the mounds covering ancient ruins.

## MOSES

"Joseph's Pharaoh," as we may call him, was certainly of a different race from the Pharaohs who reigned in the time of Moses; for Egypt was a battle-ground of races, as can be learnt through the remaining inscriptions, and through writings on the Egyptian paper—called papyrus, and made from a reed that grew in the marshy lands near the Nile.

It is as though, on our journey, we have to pass through a dark tunnel before we come out again into the daylight.

Let us enter invisibly into the home of one of the Hebrews who lived in the land of Goshen, and see what is happening and listen to what is being said. This little scene is not in the Bible, but we will use it as a signpost to guide us forward.

A man and his wife are seated by a baby's cradle and are talking together. The man's name is Amram, and his wife's name Jochebed, and they can both trace their descent to Abraham through Levi, Jacob's third son.

Let us imagine that a boy of about three, named Aaron, rushes in to look at the baby, and that his big sister, Miriam, at a sign from her mother, hurries him away.

"Oh, Amram," Jochebed sighs, "I am so afraid that if our little Aaron chatters to the neighbours, the Egyptians will guess that we have a baby in the house!"

"I am afraid, too!" says Amram mournfully. "He is such a splendid child. This command of Pharaoh that all the Hebrew boy-babies must be drowned is terrible."

"He is three months old," says his mother. "How can we hide him any longer? Every time I hear footsteps outside, I dread lest our secret is discovered, and that the Egyptian officers will rush in and seize our baby and throw him into the river Nile."

But Amram stands back and lifts his head proudly. "These mighty Egyptians are afraid of us!" he says. "They say that we are strong and powerful, and that we increase and swarm over the land, and that there is a danger lest we join their enemies in war. They cannot understand that Jehovah has given our race a pledge that through us, one day, the whole world will be blessed. Let the new Pharaoh enslave us, flog us, put us under task-masters, and order our babies to be drowned! But what can Pharaoh do in the end against the Jehovah of the Hebrews?"

## MOSES

"Oh, my husband," answers his wife sadly, "when I see the misery of our people, and hear the task-masters shouting, and see our enslaved race shrinking and bleeding under the cruel lash, my heart doubts, and I begin to think that Jehovah did not speak to our forefather Abraham. Perhaps we are doomed to perish in this land of bondage!"

"It is hard to remember," answers Amram thoughtfully, "that Jehovah does not count time as we count it. He tests us to make sure that we will trust Him. Abraham believed Jehovah, and set forth from Ur of the Chaldees, and Jehovah promised that his seed should possess the land of Canaan."

"Yet we are not in Canaan, but are bondmen in Egypt!" she mourns.

"Wife, how can Jehovah help us if we refuse to trust Him? A great thought comes to me. Who knows but what that baby there may become the Deliverer of the Hebrews from Pharaoh and his task-masters?"

"If this baby is to deliver Israel," she answers earnestly, "we must think of some plan to save him from being drowned."

"We must ask Jehovah to teach us what to do," he answers reverently.

And now we will return to the Bible. Another race of Pharaohs reigned in Egypt, who had conquered the race of Pharaohs of Joseph's time. These Pharaohs cared nothing about the old story of how the Hebrews had come to the land of Goshen, and why they had been given permission to live there.

The Hebrews had multiplied to a great host, and it was true that the Egyptians were afraid of them. Therefore they reduced them to bondage, and made them work at brick-making and building, and set task-masters over them to flog them as they chose. They were set to build the treasure-cities of Pithom and Raamses, and their lives were made bitter with hard bondage. Moreover, the wicked command had been given that when a baby was born to the Hebrews, if it were a girl it was to be saved, but if it were a boy it was to be drowned.

Now we will follow on and see what happens to Amram and Jochebed's baby.

Early one morning Jochebed might have been seen carrying a

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large basket, or "ark", which was well coated inside and out with bitumen and pitch, so that the water should not penetrate. Her daughter Miriam was with her, and together they placed the ark containing the baby in the reedy sluggish waters of a branch of the Nile, and they hid it as well as they could amongst the papyrus reeds.

Jochebed hurried away, and Miriam stayed to watch what happened to the baby. At first he lay snuggled down in the basket sound asleep; but some time afterwards, Miriam saw with anxiety that one of the Royal Princesses, a daughter of Pharaoh, attended by her maidens, had chosen that very part of the river for her morning bathe. The Princess noticed something strange lying amongst the reeds, and she sent a maid to fetch it; and when she had opened the basket, she saw the child, and behold the babe wept. The princess was grieved for him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children," and as she was wondering what to do, Miriam ventured to come closer.

"Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may suckle the child for thee?" asked Miriam.

Perhaps the Princess guessed whom the young Hebrew girl would bring. That we do not know, but Miriam went off at once and called the baby's mother.

The Princess said gently, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee wages," so Jochebed took the child home. The baby was quite safe now, for it was owned by a Princess of the royal house.

When the child was grown older, Jochebed took him to the palace, and Pharaoh's daughter adopted him as her son. She called him Moses, which meant that he had been drawn out of the water. So the Hebrew boy became an Egyptian Prince, and his life was spent in the midst of grandeur and luxury. He had slaves to wait upon him, and the finest teachers to teach him. He learnt to read and to write, and he could enjoy all the pleasures of the Court. Indeed, Moses had the chance of becoming a ruler like Joseph, a great general, a learned man, or even a Pharaoh.

Egypt was a centre of learning and culture, and the Princess took care that her adopted son should be educated according to the high standard of the day. It was said of him later that he was

## MOSES

“learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and became mighty in word and act.” In short, the young prince grew up to be a very able man.

But though Moses learnt of the gods and goddesses of Egypt and Assyria and the surrounding lands, and about the magic of the wise men and magicians, he also kept in touch with his Hebrew parents, and learnt about Jehovah. He also remained as a brother to Aaron and Miriam.

Moses was hot-tempered, yet patient; thoughtful, yet rash; affectionate and tender-hearted, yet he could also be very stern. As we travel on with him, we shall understand why he was equal in greatness to Abraham himself.

When he grew up into manhood he began to understand about the misery of the Goshen slaves, toiling in the brickfields or on the buildings, and the young Prince must have fought a battle with himself, as he gradually saw that a great choice was before him. Was he going to remain a Prince, the Son of Pharaoh's daughter, or was he to throw over his rank and luxury and take his place by the side of the Hebrews? In the Palace, he would hear the Hebrews spoken of with scorn and malice, and he may even have heard Pharaoh give still more cruel orders against his people. Yet life in a palace is attractive, and it is always easier to live securely at the top, than to go down into a life of want and pain.

Moses knew that the heathen gods and goddesses did not help mankind to happiness and to good, and he had learnt of Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from his parents. Yet it must have puzzled him greatly to know why these heirs of the Promise of Jehovah should be dying at the hands of their task-masters, in the fierce heat of an Egyptian sun.

Perhaps another puzzling thought came to him. Why had so many Hebrew boy-babies been drowned, while he had been saved? Did this mean that Jehovah had some task for him to do to save his people?

At last Moses, unable to endure his thoughts any longer, went down to Goshen, to see the horrors of the slavery for himself. The Egyptians have left us pictures of the processes of brick-making and building. We can see the slaves working under the task-masters, who are armed with heavy whips. Men are harnessed like

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beasts to intolerable loads, and are lashed like beasts by their drivers. Even the artists who were engraving these stones might at any instant feel the cut of the lash.

So it came about that as he watched, he saw an Egyptian lashing one of the Hebrews. In his anger he slew the Egyptian and buried him in the sand.

When next he visited the brickfields he saw two Hebrews fighting, and Moses said to the man who was in the wrong, "Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?"

The Hebrew answered rudely, "Who made thee a prince and judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?"

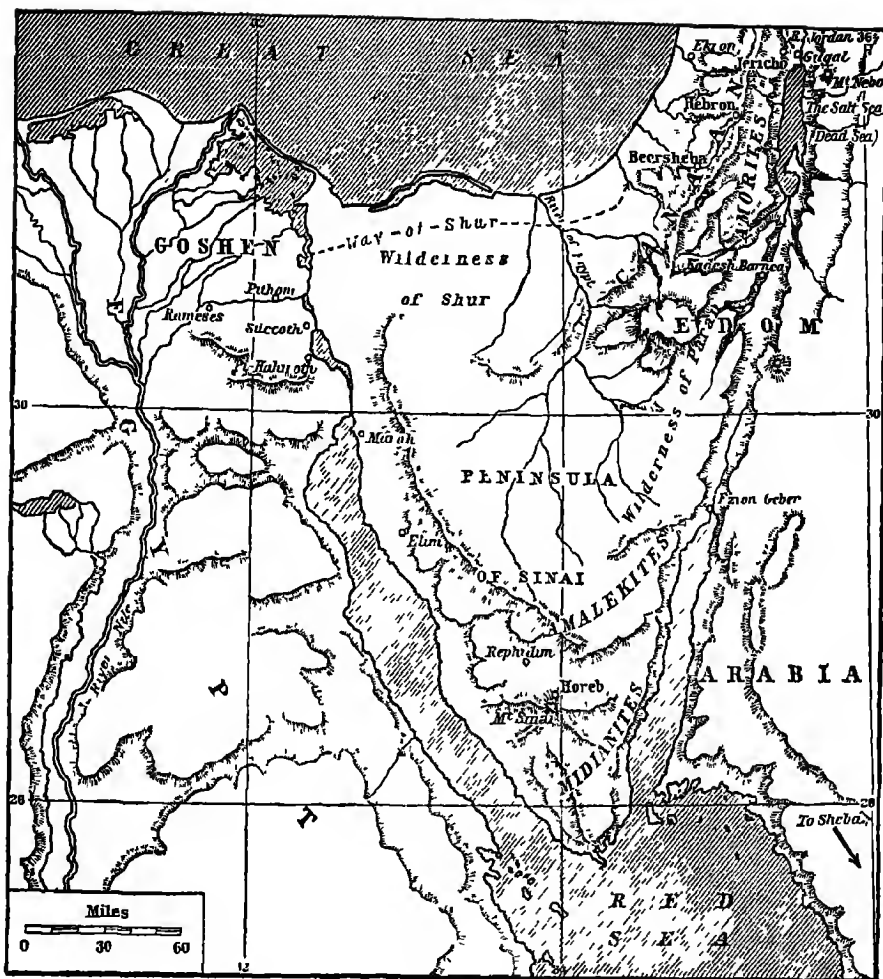
When Moses heard these words he had a shock, for it was clear that his hasty and foolish action in killing the Egyptian had become known. Indeed Pharaoh soon heard of it, and news was brought to Moses that his life was in danger.

The Princess may have been dead, or she may have married and left the palace, or Pharaoh may have been jealous of this adopted Hebrew. Of that, however, we know nothing, except that hundreds of years later, after Jesus Christ had returned to Heaven, it was written that "Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" and chose to be ill-treated with Jehovah's people rather than go on enjoying the delights of wickedness. He left Egypt, not because he feared Pharaoh's wrath, but as one who saw the King invisible.

Moses would, however, most certainly have been executed if he had remained, and now we must look at the map, to see which way he went. The Way of Shur, and the Way of the Philistines were both blocked by boundary walls, and fortifications. Had Moses attempted to get through, he would have been stopped at once. His only chance was to pass down the east side of an arm of the Red or Reed Sea. Yet he must be careful not to turn eastward into the country, for the Egyptians were working mines amongst the mountains. Therefore he kept south, until he could round the Sinai range, and he only felt himself safe when he arrived in Midian, which lay beyond the Egyptian boundary.

The finest characters in the Bible are often severely trained by God through times of great loneliness. Abraham, Isaac, and





Jacob were often lonely, and now we find Moses driven off from the rushing excitement of court life in Egypt, to the intense quietness of some of the wild places of Midian.

Now, Midian was peopled by a tribe that was descended from Midian, a son of Abraham. His mother was Keturah, whom Abraham married after Sarah was dead.

When Moses arrived, he was still shaved and dressed as an

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Egyptian. Now, his first stopping place was by the side of a well. The sheep were waiting to be watered, and he sat down, and watched as seven daughters of the Priest of Midian drew water and filled the troughs for their father's sheep.

Some rude shepherds, however, drove their sheep away, when the troughs were filled, but Moses instantly stood up for the young girls, and watered their flocks for them. They thanked Moses, and when they reached home, their father, Jethro, asked why it was that they had returned so soon.

"An Egyptian," they said, "delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and drew enough water for all our sheep."

Jethro said at once, "Where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."

So it came about that Moses lived on with Jethro, and helped him with his sheep, and married his daughter Zipporah; and a boy was born to him named Gershom.

## CHAPTER 2

### MOSES HEARS A VOICE

MEANWHILE, the Children of Israel, as we must now call them, were groaning under their slavery, sure that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had forgotten them for ever. But Jehovah had not forgotten, for at last His time had come to deliver.

One day Moses had led his flocks to the sacred mountain of Horeb. Horeb is marked on the map, but authorities do not yet agree which mountain in the Sinai district was meant. Presently he noticed that a bush was on fire. This was nothing surprising, for the sun often set alight the dried shrubs; but the puzzle was why the bush was not burnt out. Moses went nearer to examine the mystery.

"Moses! Moses!" came a voice.

Moses had thought he was quite alone with the sheep, but some one evidently knew his name. Whether he heard the voice

## MOSES HEARS A VOICE

of God with his ears or with his mind, we do not know, but we are sure that God spoke to him.

"Here am I!" answered Moses.

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet!" came the command, "for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

In the East a man takes off his shoes, not his hat, as a sign of respect; so Moses unloosed his sandals, and waited to hear what Jehovah had to say to him.

They were wonderful words, which chimed in with the very thoughts which he had been thinking as he passed days and nights under the sky.

"I am the God of thy father—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Then Moses wrapped his cloak about his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

"I have surely seen," said the voice, "the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows and am come down to deliver them, and to bring them out of that land, unto a good land and large, flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee to Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth the Children of Israel out of Egypt."

Moses was learning, to his astonishment, that Jehovah was choosing him, the man who had failed so badly in Egypt when first he tried to help! The Pharaoh who had threatened him was dead, and so were other men who had sought his life; but what of the new Pharaoh?

"But who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" he pleaded.

"I will be with thee!" said the voice; "and as a sign that I, Jehovah, speak to thee, the time shall come when thou hast brought out the people from Egypt, that ye will serve God on this very mountain."

As we travel forward on our journey we shall find that this happened.

But Moses was filled with great awe, and now that the task actually faced him he began to think out excuses.

## MOSES HEARS A VOICE

"Behold, when I come unto the Children of Israel, and shall say unto them, 'The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you,' and they shall say, 'What is his name?' What shall I say unto them?"

Learned men have found it difficult to translate into English the name which God gave. "I AM THAT I AM," is our Bible translation, but "I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE," is better and will help us to understand that God was trying to teach Moses that He was not just a tribe-god, but that as the centuries passed, He would grow up into the minds of men as the One true God. For a long time as we pass onward we shall see that men did not really understand God, and even Moses thought that He commanded him to do and say things which we now know God could not have commanded. Even to-day, though Jesus came to show us what God was really like, we still go on making mistakes about Him.

Fear grew in Moses' heart. What if the people would not believe him? Jehovah took pity on him, and gave him the power to perform some magic before the Children of Israel, as a sign that he had been sent. But Moses was not satisfied, and pleaded that he was slow of speech and not eloquent.

"Who hath made man's mouth?" asked Jehovah, "and who hath made the dumb, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, Jehovah? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

But Moses, his fear growing, again objected, for he longed that God should choose any other messenger rather than himself. So the anger of Jehovah was kindled against him, yet He took pity and offered him help in the work.

"Is not Aaron, the Levite, thy brother?" asked Jehovah. "I know that he can speak well. Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words into his mouth, and I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. He shall be thy spokesman unto the people. He shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs."

## MOSES RETURNS TO EGYPT

### CHAPTER 3

#### MOSES RETURNS TO EGYPT

News had reached the Hebrews, enslaved in Egypt, that the brother of Aaron, the Prince who had been brought up in the royal Palace and who had fled away eastward, had returned; and soon they found themselves called together, that he might give them a message from Jehovah.

For through these hundreds of years, they had heard the stories we have already read, as their fathers and mothers told them, so they knew something of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though their knowledge and their faith were very dim.

We can almost see their strained anxious faces as they gathered to hear Moses and Aaron, hoping against hope that he had a saving message to give them. Moses, through Aaron, explained that Jehovah had sent him to rescue them from Pharaoh, that the days of their bondage were coming to an end, and that they were to be led forth to the country which Jehovah had once promised to their forefathers.

Yet how could they believe that Moses and Aaron had come from Jehovah? Jehovah knew how difficult it was for these people, surrounded by idol-worshippers, to believe in an Invisible God, so He allowed Moses to do miracles to convince them of his sacred power.

Moses threw down his staff or rod, and instantly it became a snake. Then he took it up by its tail, and it became a staff again. Secondly, he put his hand under his tunic, and it came out diseased with leprosy. Then he put it back, and when he drew it out again it was healthy as the other. The Hebrews, watching these signs, believed, and they bowed their heads and worshipped Jehovah.

But now Moses and Aaron had to face a harder task. They went in boldly to Pharaoh and cried:

"Thus saith Jehovah of Israel, 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness'."

"Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?" demanded Pharaoh.

## MOSES RETURNS TO EGYPT

"The God of the Hebrews hath met with us," they replied. "Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto Jehovah, lest He fall upon us with pestilence and the sword."

But Pharaoh answered, "Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, hinder the people from going on with their work? Get you back to your tasks!"

And now Pharaoh wasted no time in ordering the task-masters and the officers, who were Hebrews, to make the work still harder. They were not to supply the straw for the brick-making, and the Hebrews were to gather it for themselves—yet they were to make just as many bricks as they had made before!

So the people had to scatter to find straw, which may have been used for mixing with the clay, or for rubbing their hands clean, or for placing round the bricks when put into the moulds.

We can almost feel the excitement, as the Hebrew slaves were called together to hear the new regulations. They had expected something very different, and they were bitterly disappointed. All too soon, they knew by the cruel lash that the orders were real enough, and even the Hebrew officers were beaten because they had not got the full number of bricks from their fellows.

So the officers went forth to Pharaoh and cried to him, "Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks,' and behold thy servants are beaten, and the fault is with thine own people."

But Pharaoh was enraged at the complaint, and cried, "Ye are idle! Ye are idle! Therefore it is that ye say, 'Let us go and do sacrifice to Jehovah.' Therefore go and work, for there shall no straw be given you, yet ye shall deliver the number of bricks."

So the officers, as they came out from Pharaoh, met Moses and Aaron, and they spoke to them angrily, out of the despair in their hearts, "Jehovah look upon you and judge. You have made us hated of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hands to slay us."

But Moses did not answer back unkindly, for he saw the genuineness of their trouble, and in his grief he went to Jehovah.

## MOSES RETURNS TO EGYPT

"Lord," he cried, "wherefore hast Thou so hurt this people? Why didst Thou send me to save them? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all!"

Jehovah was not displeased with Moses for his doubt, but gave him strong words of confidence.

"Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

"Say to the Children of Israel, 'I am Jehovah, and will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians—I will redeem you with a stretched out arm and great judgments.

"And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah. And I will bring you into the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'."

But alas, when Moses and Aaron passed on the message, the Hebrews would not listen nor believe, because of the cruel bondage.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PLAGUES

WE are now face to face with a contest between the will of Jehovah and the will of Pharaoh.

This story of the great rescue from Egypt was handed down for hundreds of years by word of mouth and by writing, amongst the Children of Israel, and in the Bible we can learn a great deal as to what happened.

At first Moses only demanded that the Hebrews should be allowed to go out of Egypt to hold a feast to Jehovah; but as Pharaoh refused even so much permission, Moses demanded more and more, so that in the end, Pharaoh should actually himself drive out the Hebrews from his land. But Pharaoh had no intention of allowing his valuable slaves to go. So Jehovah, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, brought plagues down upon Egypt.

## THE PLAGUES

Time after time Pharaoh promised to let the people go if the plague were taken away, but the moment the plague disappeared, Pharaoh hardened his heart and became as obstinate and cruel as ever.

Plagues were common occurrences in Egypt, but these plagues are remarkable as coming by the direct command of God because of Pharaoh's sin and defiance.

So it happened that one morning, as Pharaoh was about to take his bathe, Moses and Aaron appeared and warned him to let the Children of Israel go. But as he refused, Moses stretched out his rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and all the waters were turned to the colour of blood. The fish died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river, and they had to dig round about for water.

But Pharaoh took no notice of this plague, and Moses now warned him that Jehovah would smite his borders with frogs.

"The river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens and into thy kneading troughs."

But Pharaoh refused the warning, and the plague came. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Entreat the Lord that he may take away the frogs, and I will let the people go to do sacrifice unto Jehovah."

And when Moses asked when the frogs should depart, Pharaoh said "To-morrow."

So Moses answered, "Be it according to thy word, that thou mayest know that there is none like unto Jehovah."

So Moses prayed to Jehovah to remove the frogs; and the frogs died out of the houses, the villages and fields. They gathered them together into heaps, and the land stank.

But as soon as Pharaoh saw that the frogs were gone, he hardened his heart as Jehovah had warned Moses that he would.

We will now pass forward to the plague of flies—probably some kind of horrible stinging dog-fly.

"Thus saith Jehovah," said Moses to Pharaoh, as he returned from his morning bathe: "Let My people go, that they may



## THE PLAGUES

serve Me, else if thou wilt not let them go, behold I will send swarms of flies upon thee and upon thy servants . . . and I will sever in that day the land of Goshen in which my people dwell, and no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am Jehovah in the midst of the earth."

Pharaoh was certainly moved by this intolerable plague, and he called for Moses and Aaron, and suggested that they should sacrifice to their God in Egypt, without going away.

But Moses would not accept. He explained that the Egyptians would certainly stone them if they saw them sacrificing animals which they considered to be sacred. So Pharaoh agreed that they might go, so long as they did not go very far away. Yet as soon as Jehovah had taken away the flies, Pharaoh hardened his heart again, and refused to let the Israelites go.

So the plagues went on, and Moses announced a dreadful disease amongst the cattle, oxen, sheep, and camels, and declared that not one beast belonging to the Israelites would suffer.

And so it was, and when Pharaoh sent to Goshen and found that no beast had died there, he seemed angrier than ever and refused to let the people go. So again there came a warning.

"Behold," said Moses to Pharaoh, "to-morrow, about this time, I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof, even until now. Send therefore now and gather all thou hast in the field, for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them and they shall die."

So as Pharaoh's servants listened, some of them who feared Jehovah hurried away to bring their servants and cattle indoors. But those who mocked at the words of Moses let them remain out of doors. So the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt that which was in the field, and the hail smote every herb and brake every tree. Only in the land of Goshen, there was no hail.

Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, in great fear, and said, "Entreat Jehovah that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail. I have sinned this time! Jehovah is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer."

## THE PLAGUES

"As soon as I am gone forth from the city," answered Moses, "I will spread out my hands unto Jehovah, and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail, that thou mayest know that the earth is Jehovah's. But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear Jehovah."

And so it happened, and when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders had ceased, he hardened his heart, and his servants hardened their hearts, and Pharaoh refused to let the people go.

The hail had broken the trees, and destroyed the flax and barley, but the wheat and rye was safe, because it had not yet grown up.

So Moses was obliged to go again to Pharaoh with yet another warning.

"Thus saith the God of the Hebrews, 'How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before Me? Let My people go that they may serve Me. Else if thou refuse to let My people go, behold to-morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast, and they shall cover the face of the earth that one cannot be able to see the earth, and they shall eat that which remaineth after the hail. They shall fill thy houses and the houses of thy servants . . .'"

Then without waiting for an answer, they left Pharaoh's presence.

But Pharaoh's servants were getting very anxious over their master's abstinacy.

"How long shall this man be a snare unto us?" they asked. "Let the men go, that they may serve Jehovah their God. Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?"

So Moses and Aaron were brought back, and Pharaoh asked whom they wanted to take with them.

"We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters, and with our flocks and with our herds. For we must hold a feast to Jehovah." Moses determined that he would now make it clear that there was more at stake than a three days' sacrifice.

Then indeed Pharaoh was enraged, for he could see that this meant that Moses was determined to lead out the Hebrews from the land of Egypt for ever.

So Pharaoh blustered and spoke fiercely, and said: "Not so!





## THE PLAGUES

Go now ye that are men and serve Jehovah; for that ye did desire."

So Moses and Aaron were driven from his presence.

The locusts arrived in a great cloud, so that the land was darkened. Locusts, even to-day, are dreaded as a devouring army is dreaded, for they eat up every green thing as they travel. This locust army spread and devoured, and Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in hot haste.

"I have sinned against Jehovah and against you. Now, therefore, forgive, I pray thee, my sin, only this once, and entreat Jehovah your God, that he may take away from me this death."

So Jehovah sent a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.

Pharaoh's obstinate heart was hardened once more, and he refused to let the people go. Then, without giving warning, Moses stretched out his hand towards heaven, and a thick darkness fell upon Egypt for three dreadful days. It was a darkness that could be felt, and was probably caused by a great sand-storm. But the Children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

So Pharaoh called for Moses, and said, "Go up, serve Jehovah, only let your flocks and your herds stay behind. Let your little ones also go with you."

But Moses answered, "Thou must also give into our hands sacrifices and burnt offerings that we may sacrifice unto Jehovah our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve Jehovah our God; and we know not with what we must serve Jehovah until we come thither."

Then Pharaoh knew quite clearly what Moses really wanted, and he hardened his heart, and he would not let them go.

"Get thee from me!" cried Pharaoh. "Take heed to thyself; see my face no more, for in the day thou seest my face, thou shalt die."

Then Moses made his last solemn revelation to Pharaoh.

"Thus saith Jehovah, 'About midnight, will I go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon the throne, even unto the first-born of the maidservant that is behind the mill,

## THE PLAGUES

and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the Children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, neither against man nor beast, that ye may know how Jehovah hath put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.'

"And all these thy servants shall come to me, and bow themselves down to me, saying, 'Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee.'

"And after that, I will go out! "

Then Moses went out from the presence of Pharaoh in great anger.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE DELIVERANCE

THERE was excitement enough in Goshen as plague after plague fell upon the oppressors. Work was completely disorganized, and the Israelites were plucking up heart as they saw the Egyptians shrinking with an awful dread before Jehovah and before Moses.

The whole matter was a great disaster for the Egyptians; for had the Children of Israel left Egypt in peace and honour, they would have carried away with them kindly thoughts of many of those with whom they had lived so long.

Jehovah had given Pharaoh chance after chance of doing the fair thing by this Hebrew race which was now enslaved in his land; but Pharaoh had hardened his heart against them, and when a man hardens his heart to do wrong, it is as though God allows him to take his own way and hardens his heart, as the Bible says happened to Pharaoh.

That evening, the Israelites, at the command of Moses, prepared a meal of roast lamb and bread without yeast, and vegetables, and the boys and girls watched with great surprise as their fathers dipped a bunch of herbs into a bowl of the blood from the lamb, and made marks on the doorposts and lintels of each house. As night fell, the streets were silent and empty, for Moses had com-

## THE DELIVERANCE

manded the people to stay in their houses, shut their doors, and eat their last meal in Egypt, standing ready dressed for a journey. Jehovah was to smite the first-born in Egypt that night, but when He saw the blood on the doorposts and lintels of any house, that house was safely passed over.

That is why the Israelites then, as the Jews to-day, kept the Feast of the Passover as a sign that they have never forgotten this night. We shall remember that the last meal that Jesus Christ ate was the "Passover" meal, which He ate with His disciples before He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

But that is a long, long stride ahead in our Journey, and we must return to Egypt.

It came to pass that at Midnight Jehovah smote all the first-born in the land, from the first-born of Pharaoh, to the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said: "Rise up and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the Children of Israel, and go, serve Jehovah, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds and be gone; and bless me also."

Then the Egyptians crowded about Moses and Aaron, and were urgent to the Israelites that they should be gone. They wished to drive them forth from the land in a hurry, lest, they said, "We be all dead men."

Moses was also urgent upon the people to hurry away before Pharaoh changed his mind; so they started out even with unbaked dough carried in their kneeding troughs on their shoulders. That was a night of rush and excitement. Men, women, boys and girls, and the babies in arms, the flocks and the herds, were to leave Egypt for ever.

The Egyptians, terrified at the very sight of them, appealed to them to be gone. They poured out presents upon them, of gold, jewels, clothes, and valuables of all kinds, as though to pay back for the long years of misery, oppression, and robbery which the Israelites had endured.

## THE DELIVERANCE

One solemn act was not forgotten by Moses. The great Egyptian Governor, Joseph, had commanded that his bones should be laid at rest in Canaan. The coffin and mummy of Joseph, the lad who had entered Egypt as a heart-broken slave, was therefore carried off with all honour.

So the Children of Israel left the land of Goshen and other parts of Egypt, and by the time the morning sun arose they were marching steadily forward towards the "Edge of the Wilderness." Moses knew that the Way of Shur, and the Way, known later as the Way of the Philistines, were impossible roads to take, and might lead to instant conflict.

The Children of Israel, and the mixed crowd who came with them, encamped in Etham on the edge of the wilderness. They were full of confidence, for Jehovah went before them, to lead them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The Red Sea came much farther north in those days, and was connected with lakes and shallow waters, and Jehovah commanded that camp should be pitched on the western side of its northern arm.

And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the Israelites, and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"

So Pharaoh made ready his chariots, and took his servants with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and set captains over every one of them.

And Pharaoh pursued after the Children of Israel, and he overtook them, encamping by the sea beside Pi-hahiroth.

But when Pharaoh drew nigh, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid. In their terror they turned upon Moses angrily and said, "Was it because there are no graves in Egypt, that thou hast taken us away to die in this wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Did we not tell you in Egypt to let us alone to serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

We shall see at once how unfair this speech was to Moses, but he was learning patience, and he answered solemnly,



## THE DELIVERANCE

**"Fear ye not! Stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah, which He will show you this day. For the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see no more for ever. Jehovah shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."**

Then the people noticed that the pillar of cloud went behind them, and was between them and the camp of the Egyptians. It was a cloud of darkness to the Egyptians, but it gave light to the Israelites, so that the one camp did not come near to the other camp all through the night.

Most of the pictures we have seen of the crossing of the Red Sea are probably quite imaginary, for it is difficult to judge as to what did happen exactly. But we are told that Jehovah caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, which would mean that the waters from the lakes and shallows would ebb away, and that a wide expanse of solid ground would be cleared.

The Children of Israel were given the astounding order to march straight forward into this stretch of ground cleared from the water. It shows that they must have had some trust in Moses and Jehovah, or they would have refused to go. But they went forward safely, with their flocks and herds, and their two-wheeled wagons which carried their possessions and their little ones.

But in the dawn, Jehovah looked towards the Egyptians, and as they dashed after the Israelites their chariot wheels became blocked, and they drove heavily in the soft ground, and as the wind blew violently, they turned, trying to escape.

**"Let us flee from the face of Israel!" they cried, "for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians."**

But as the morning advanced, the sea returned to its strength and the Egyptians were overwhelmed. The Israelites had passed through safely, but the Egyptians were to be seen, dead upon the sea shore.

The terrible danger of being recaptured by Pharaoh was over, and Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and the women went out with her with timbrels and dances, and Miriam sang:

**"Sing ye to Jehovah, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."**



## Part Four

### CHAPTER I

#### MOSES, THE NATIONAL LEADER

**N**OW that Moses had brought the Children of Israel safely out of Egypt, we might naturally imagine that his worst troubles were over, and that he would spend the rest of his life as a great leader of an obedient and loyal people.

Alas! his struggle against Pharaoh was as nothing compared with the struggle he endured in his endeavour to develop a nation of God-fearing people, from these stiff-necked, obstinate Children of Israel, who grumbled at every difficulty and blocked Moses time after time.

But as we travel forward, we shall begin to understand the true greatness of Moses, not when he lost his temper and blazed forth in wrath, but when in meekness and unselfishness he tried to lead the people in the right way. We shall also learn something of what Moses thought of Jehovah. Our journey is now to take us from Egypt to the Promised Land, and it would be a very short and

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beautiful journey, if the children of Israel had obeyed Jehovah and Moses.

Now, though the Children of Israel had been slaves during their last generations, we must not make the mistake of thinking of them as ignorant. When Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, he left a great civilisation behind him, and during the prosperous years under Joseph, and probably later, the Israelites were in close touch with the learning and the culture and art of Egypt.

We shall find them skilled in many directions, and Moses, as we know, had been given the highest education that the world at that time could offer. But we shall also see clearly that during the slavery years, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had become strange to them. They had become familiar with the Egyptian idol-worship and with Egyptian wickedness. They were a discouraged nation of slaves, and their grumbling natures hurt Moses time after time, as he tried to do his best for them.

Though a map gives us a general idea of this migration from Egypt to Canaan, it is not possible to identify every spot with exactness, though keen explorers have discovered enough to help us to follow the main story. The history of the wilderness journey has to be gathered from the books in the Bible which we call Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, and we shall follow the journey as far as we can. We must think of this crowd of Israelites, starting forth under Moses' direction, feeling anxious and worried, and far from sure that all was well.

## CHAPTER 2

### TROUBLES ON THE JOURNEY

ONE of the first difficulties which faces a great travelling company is the need of food and water. Moses was confident that Jehovah would meet every want, if only the people would be obedient and loyal; for as Jehovah had led them out of Egypt, He would most certainly supply their needs.

But the Israelites were not so sure, and when the first testing

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time came, and they suffered thirst, they began to grumble. They had reached a spot called Marah, where there was water enough, but, alas, it was so bitter that they could not drink it!

"What shall we drink?" they cried to Moses.

Moses turned to Jehovah, who instructed him to cast a certain tree into the water, which would make the water fresh and pure. He did so, and the people and the flocks and herds drank gladly.

Moses now spoke to the great company very earnestly. He pleaded with them to listen to Jehovah's commands, and to seek to do what was right. But we shall soon see that the people had very little mind to obey.

A short time after this, they reached Elim, where there were twelve wells and seventy palm trees, and they were joyful indeed to rest there after the great excitement of escaping from Egypt. But when, by and by, the cloud lifted, they followed it towards Sinai, a district which Moses knew well, for he had spent many years there with his father-in-law Jethro, as we know.

As they travelled, word was passing from one to another, that there was a danger of food shortage, and a great fear gripped them, so the whole crowd murmured against Moses and Aaron, and used a cruel accusation.

"Would to God," they shouted, "we had died at the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt. In Egypt we sat by the flesh-pots, and ate bread to the full. And now ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill the whole assembly with hunger!"

But Moses understood their mood and their terror, and he was very patient with them. Jehovah provided them with a food called "Manna" every day until they reached Canaan. No one knows quite what manna was, so we will call it by its beautiful Bible name, "Angel's Food." Even to-day, travellers tell us, in that district the people eat of a sweet substance which drops from the tamarisk trees, and which they can cook.

"In the morning ye shall see the glory of Jehovah!" said Moses, "for he heareth your murmurings against Jehovah; and what are we that ye murmur against us?"

Now, when the people waked in the morning and left their tents, the dew was rising, and men, women, boys, and girls soon noticed a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost. They





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picked some up and tasted it, and found that it was sweet, and they wondered what it could be.

"This," said Moses, "is the bread which Jehovah hath given you to eat. Gather of it, every man according to his eating, an omer measure, according to the number of your persons take ye every man for them which are in his tents."

And the Children of Israel gathered, and we may be sure that the boys and girls helped in the gathering. But Moses warned them not to leave any over until the morning, for the new manna would be there ready for them. Only on the sixth day, they were to gather twice as much, as no manna would fall on the seventh or Sabbath Day.

Though the people were pleased to have the manna, they could not believe that it would really come every day, so some of them made sure and gathered extra. But next morning they found that what they had hoarded was no good. It stank, and they had to throw it away, and rush out to gather more of the fresh food that was lying round them. Yet when they kept the double supply for the Sabbath, they found it was quite pure and good.

So they moved forward, and the manna was always there for them, and by and by they reached Rephidim. They were now close to Horeb, where Moses had lived for so long. Again water was short. Such a company would carry quantities of water-skins, tied on to their asses, and they would fill them up when they reached streams or wells. But at Rephidim there was no water, and the people turned upon Moses furiously.

"Give us water to drink!" they shouted.

Some of them indeed began to think of lifting stones to kill Moses.

Now, thirst is a maddening misery, worse than hunger, and we can be sorry for the Israelites, as they found themselves threatened with thirst. Yet Moses was obliged to reproach them for being in such a fury against him, and, worse still, of being so disloyal to Jehovah.

The people answered Moses still more indignantly.

"Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of Egypt," they shouted, "to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

So Moses went away alone with Jehovah that he might learn what to do.

## TROUBLES ON THE JOURNEY

"What have I to do unto this people?" he pleaded. "They are almost ready to stone me!"

Jehovah gave Moses his instructions, and calling together the elders, or chief men of the tribes he led them up amongst the rocks of Horeb. Many of the people followed, for they wondered what was going to happen. Then Moses lifted his rod, which he had brought with him from Egypt, and, calling upon the name of Jehovah, he struck the rock. Instantly there flowed down a torrent of water, and the people rushed to drink in an agony of joy. The very animals must have stampeded, that they might share the water.

Moses called the place "Massah," which meant "tempting," and "Meribah" which meant "strife," because there the people had had strife with Moses and had tempted or doubted Jehovah by asking: "Is Jehovah amongst us or not?"

They must have felt very much ashamed of their rough words and threats; but here we may remind ourselves that the mixed crowd which had come out of Egypt with the Children of Israel always had a bad influence in the camp. They knew nothing of Jehovah, and they enticed the Israelites to rebel and do wrong.

## CHAPTER 3

### A VISIT FROM JETHRO

It was while they were camping near Rephidim that Moses was surprised one day to see a group of visitors arriving. But they were no strangers. There was his wife, his two sons, and Jethro, his father-in-law. He hurried to meet them, and bowed low, and kissed his father-in-law.

They asked one another of their welfare, and Moses brought them into his tent. How eagerly they talked together! Moses told his father-in-law of all that Jehovah had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and of all the troubles through which they had passed.

Jethro was a God-fearing man, and, as Priest of Midian, he worshipped Jehovah, his ancestor Abraham's God. So Jethro was pleased indeed to hear what Moses had to tell him.



## A VISIT FROM JETHRO

"Now I know," he said, "that Jehovah is greater than all gods!"

We shall notice here that in those days the nations still believed in many gods—every nation had its god—and Jethro now proudly placed Jehovah at the head of the other gods. He had not yet learnt that there is but One God of all the earth. As we travel on, we shall find that the Israelites were constantly making this mistake.

It is clear that Jethro was really fond of Moses, and that Moses valued his father-in-law and depended upon his wise advice. Jethro proposed to honour Jehovah by a great sacrificial feast, to which the Elders of Israel were invited. He took a true interest in all that Moses was attempting to do, and when he noticed that Moses sat daily, judging the people, and listening to complaints and settling disputes, he told him quite bluntly that his plan was not good.

"Thou wilt surely wear away," he said, "both thou and this people; for this thing is too heavy for thee. Thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice, and I will give thee counsel and God will be with thee."

It was, of course, Moses' task to show Jehovah's will to the people, and to teach them the laws and the rules; but Jethro advised him to choose out some of the ablest of the people, and to appoint them to sit in judgment upon the smaller disputes, reserving the most important decisions for himself. Moses saw at once the wisdom of this plan, and immediately chose out able and wise men to help him. They now sat and judged the people, and settled all the small matters; but the hard cases were still brought to Moses.

It was in this way that a National life was started, and what was known as the "Law of Moses" grew and developed. This "Law of Moses" went on growing long after Moses himself was dead, but it was still called by his name. Little by little it was inscribed by hand on the rolls, and by the time that Jesus was a boy in Nazareth there were many such rolls kept in the Jewish synagogues. It was about this Law that Jesus asked questions and answered questions, when He first visited the Temple at Jerusalem.

We have taken a peep forward of many hundreds of years, but we must return to Moses and the Israelites.

## ON THE PLAIN BEFORE SINAI

### CHAPTER 4

#### ON THE PLAIN BEFORE SINAI

WE read very little about the boys and girls who travelled through the Wilderness, but there were a great many of them. They must have enjoyed the exciting life, and certainly there was plenty for them to do. Every time they struck camp, things had to be packed, and, as they marched, both boys and girls would help to see that the sheep and herds did not stray, and they would, we may be sure, keep a sharp look out for the wild beasts that lurked behind the rocks and amongst the trees and undergrowth. They would soon learn how to erect the tents, and bring water and gather manna, run messages, look after the little ones, and help their mothers.

During the day, as they marched, they could see the wonder of the Jehovah-Cloud, as it advanced, showing them the way, and most thrilling of all were those times when they marched through the long, cool night, and the cloud turned to fire.

How strange this wilderness must have seemed to them after Egypt! Here there were no stone temples, no mighty pillars upon which the figures of the Pharaohs were carved. Here, there were mountains and rocks and lovely glades or wadies, with flowers of brilliant colour, and fruits of exquisite taste, and, best of all, sheltering trees, where they could rest when the sun blazed down upon them. Often there was the excitement of hunting, and, whatever trouble came, there was at least no sound of the cruel task-master's whip, nor the shriek of pain.

Moses must always have had a smile for the children, and we may imagine that as he sat at his tent door the boys and girls squatted on the turf, and he would tell them of his rescue from the river, his life as a royal Prince in Pharaoh's palace, and of the kind Princess who had acted as a mother to him.

Yet all was not happiness amongst the Israelites. In every group of people there are those who gaily make the best of things, and those who take every chance to grumble; those who are anxious to serve others, and those who want to grab all the best for themselves. It must sometimes have surprised the boys and

## ON THE PLAIN BEFORE SINAI

girls when they heard their parents grumbling and saying that, after all, they had been better off when they were in Egypt.

At last a day came when they reached a wide open plain, and set up their camp under the towering range of Sinai, with its many peaks, some so high that they shone with snow. This Plain of Sinai was fertile, and up the mountain slopes there was abundant food for the stock, and also rich ground in the abutting wadies or dells. Here was indeed a splendid camping ground, and, having pitched their tents, they settled down for a long rest. They certainly needed a time of quiet after their exciting adventures, and it was also necessary that Moses should find time to teach them more about Jehovah.

We must realise that these Israelites had grown up surrounded by idol-worshippers, and that what little they knew of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been handed down to them from father to son from the days of Joseph. Amram and Jochebed had certainly taught Moses about Jehovah; but no one, not even Moses, really understood Him, though Moses understood more than any one else.

In our Introduction we found that God is to be our Hero, and as we think of the "Our Father" prayer which Jesus, God's Son, taught us to pray, we shall see that many of the men and women we shall meet on our journey were a long way from understanding God.

But at least Moses knew that amongst the nations there was great wickedness, and that Jehovah had chosen out a race to train, so that, through them, all the world might be blessed.

A mountain or hill was thought to be a spot specially chosen by the gods, and when Moses wished to speak with Jehovah, he went up one of the mountains which overlooked the plain where the Israelites were encamped. On one particular day he instructed the people that they must wash themselves and their clothes and be ready when Jehovah Himself came down to Mount Sinai in His splendour. They were not to touch the mountain, on pain of death, and any beast that had touched the mountain was to be slaughtered. On the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud was upon the Mount, and there came the sound of a mysterious trumpet which made the people tremble with fear.

## ON THE PLAIN BEFORE SINAI

It was as though the whole mountain smoked, because Jehovah was descending upon it in fire; and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. As for the mysterious trumpet, it sounded louder and louder. And the people listened in awe as the commandments, which we call The Ten Commandments, were given by Jehovah.

And all the people heard the thunderings and the noise of the trumpet, and saw the lightnings and the mountain smoking, and they were so afraid that they moved back and back, so that they might get far away.

They cried to Moses: "Speak thou to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

But Moses said to them: "Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

Still the people were afraid; but Moses was not afraid, and he went right into the thick darkness where God was. And it came about that Jehovah called him a second time to the Mount, for He had much to tell him; so Moses left the Israelites under charge of Aaron and one of the elders named Hur, and took with him a young man whom he could trust, named Joshua. The people watched as Moses and Joshua disappeared into a cloud on the Mountain, and it was to them as though Jehovah Himself appeared like a devouring fire.

Each day the Israelites expected to see Moses and Joshua return; but when forty days had passed and there was no sign of them, the grumblers amongst the people gained a victory over the rest, and led them into terrible mischief. They gathered about Aaron excitedly and threateningly, and demanded that he should make them the image of a god to lead them forward.

"As for this Moses," they said, "the man that brought us up out of Egypt, we know not what has become of him."

Aaron's duty was to have acted loyally by Moses, but, instead, he gave way to the outcries of the angry crowd.

"Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons and your daughters," he commanded, "and bring them to me."

The people obeyed, and Aaron melted down the gold, and having carved out a wooden calf he covered it with gold.

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Certainly Aaron never intended that the calf should be worshipped as an idol, and he only thought of it as a symbol of Jehovah, in the same way that we might use an olive branch as a symbol of Peace.

But the people, who had seen the carved figures of the sacred cows in Egypt, were wild with joy when they saw this golden calf, and when they heard Aaron cry: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt. To-morrow we will hold a feast to Jehovah."

The people rose early next morning, and brought offerings in honour of the Golden Calf, and they ate and drank, and then rose up to dance and to play. But the people, dancing in the plain, had forgotten that Jehovah was watching, and He spoke to Moses, telling him what He had seen.

"Behold," said Jehovah, "I have seen this people, and it is a stiff-necked people. Now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation."

But in spite of all the murmurings and rudenesses with which the Children of Israel had made Moses suffer, he could not bear that Jehovah should forsake them, and he could not take any honour for himself. So he pleaded for the people, and said:

"Why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power and a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, 'For mischief did Jehovah bring them out, to slay them in the mountains.' Turn from that fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people."

So Jehovah listened to his noble servant, and repented of the evil He had thought to do unto his people. Then Moses went down the mountain, and the two tablets of stone were in his hand, on which the commandments had been written. They were not the great stones so often shown in pictures, but were stone tablets, covered with tiny writing such as have been discovered and can be seen in our museums.

Now, Moses had not yet seen what the people were doing, and as he and Joshua passed down some fold in the mountain, and

## ON THE PLAIN BEFORE SINAI

before they could see the plain, Joshua suddenly exclaimed: "There is a noise of war in the camp."

Moses paused and listened and answered, "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that are being defeated, but the noise of them that sing!"

Moses was right; for as they emerged on the breast of the mountain they could see the plain, and on it were the men, women, and children, shouting and dancing and singing in honour of the Golden Calf. And when Moses saw it, he could scarcely believe the sight. Was he back in Egypt? Then in a passion of grief and fury he dashed down the tablets, and they fell crashing, broken to fragments. The people looked up. The singing stopped—Moses had returned!

Moses wasted no words. He took the calf and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and threw the powder upon the water, and made the Children of Israel drink it. And at last he turned upon Aaron.

"What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" he asked.

Aaron answered, "Let not the anger of my lord wax hot; thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. And they said unto me, 'Make us gods, which shall go before us, for as for this Moses, we know not what has become of him!' And I said, 'Whoever hath any gold, let them break it off.' So they gave the gold to me, and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

This was indeed a weak excuse for Aaron to make, and Jehovah answered it by causing a terrible sickness to fall upon the guilty people. And then it was that Moses broke down in utter sorrow, and lay upon his face before Jehovah.

"Oh, this people," he cried, "have sinned a great sin, and made them gods of gold, yet now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book!"

But Jehovah answered, "Whoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book."

As we travel further, we shall find, over and over again, that the making of idols was considered to be a great sin, which always brought down trouble upon the idolators. Jehovah was an Invisible God—so much at least the best of the people knew—

## ON THE PLAIN BEFORE SINAI

and altogether different from the gods of the nations round about. Yet the Israelites were constantly falling into the sin of idol-worship, and their prophets were as constantly preaching against it.

The first two commandments were very clear, and could not be mistaken.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

“Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor worship them.”

## CHAPTER 5

### A MYSTERIOUS REQUEST

WHILE the Israelites were encamping on the Sinai plain, they had a special tent, called the Tent of Meeting. This was dedicated to Jehovah. Here sacrifices were offered, and above this tent the Pillar of Cloud and Pillar of Fire rested, and here Jehovah spoke to Moses and gave him directions.

But one day, soon after the making of the Golden Calf, Jehovah called Moses and said: “Depart, and go up from here, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of Egypt, unto the land which I sware I would give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a land flowing with milk and honey, for I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee on the journey thither.”

But when Moses repeated Jehovah's words to the people they mourned at the dreadful tidings. They could rebel against Jehovah, but they could not endure that Jehovah should forsake them. So they stripped off their ornaments as a sign of their penitence, and Moses took the Tent of Meeting and set it far away, outside the camp.

“And it came to pass, when Moses went into the Tabernacle (or Tent of Meeting), that all the people rose up and stood every

## A MYSTERIOUS REQUEST

man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, as he was gone into the Tabernacle.

"And it came to pass that as Moses entered into the Tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door, and Jehovah talked with Moses. And all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door.

"And Jehovah spake to Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend." Then Moses again pleaded with Jehovah not to forsake his people.

"Thou sayest unto me," said Moses, "bring up this people, and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. And now, therefore, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me Thy way, that I may know Thee. Consider now, O Jehovah, that this people is Thy people!"

Then Jehovah replied to his anxious servant, "I, My very own self shall go with thee!"

"If Thou, Thine own self, go not with me," said Moses, "carry us not up hence, for how shall it be known that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us?" Then Jehovah promised Moses that He would be with him, and Moses took courage to make one more request

Moses longed to understand what Jehovah was really like, far more clearly than he had yet done.

"I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory!" he pleaded.

"I will make all my goodness to pass before thee," said Jehovah, "but thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me and live."

And Jehovah said: "Behold there is a place by Me, and Thou shalt stand upon the rock. And it shall come to pass while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will protect thee with My hand while I pass by. And I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see my back, but My face shall not be seen."

We have here again one of the mysterious descriptions, which we cannot quite understand, such as we had when Jacob wrestled with the Angel.



## A HAPPY PICTURE

### CHAPTER 6

#### A HAPPY PICTURE

Now, while Moses had been in the Mountain with Jehovah, he had been given a vision of a beautiful Tent of Meeting which might be made, and one day he asked the people to help him to make the Tent of Meeting worthy of Jehovah, and to bring him anything they cared to offer, from the willingness of their hearts.

The news rushed from tent to tent in the camp, and the people were glad to show their confidence in Moses once more; so they searched through the stores which they had brought from Egypt, to find the very best they had to give for Jehovah's Tent of Meeting. The women brought bracelets and earrings and jewels of all kinds. The men brought blue and purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen and goats'-hair cloth, and skins of rams and badgers. They provided shittim wood, from the trees that grew in such abundance round about, and the skilled women spun and brought their cloth, and the rulers brought precious stones and spice and oil and incense.

Two clever artists and craftsmen, Bezaleel and Aholiab, took up the oversight of the work with great keenness. They could work in gold and silver and brass, and could carve and engrave. They taught others to help, and we may be sure that the boys and girls also found something they could do.

Every morning the people brought their gifts, and Moses handed them over to Bezaleel and Aholiab; and at last he was told that he must stop the people from being so generous, for they now had enough for the work. This was glad news for Moses, and the people watched keenly as this beautiful Tent of Meeting was made, with the courts round about. Within this Tent of Meeting there was an inner chamber called the Holy of Holies, and the outer chamber was called the Holy place. Within the Holy of Holies rested the Golden Ark of the Covenant, of which we shall hear a good deal later.

The tablets of stone, which had been remade, were placed within the Ark, and above the lid two golden angels were set with outstretched wings, as a sign that Jehovah made his home amongst the

## A HAPPY PICTURE

people. In the outer chamber, there was an altar of incense, a table on which rested twelve loaves of bread, and golden candlesticks. The cloud hung over this Tent of Meeting by day and the fire by night, and when the cloud rose, then the people knew that Jehovah wished them to move.

A wonderful story is told of how, when Moses returned from the Mount a second time, having received the new tablets from Jehovah, his face shone so strangely and beautifully that the people were afraid to come near him. So Moses had to put a veil over his face, while he told the people of Jehovah's commands. And this is the "Blessing" which Aaron and his sons were to speak, when they blessed the people.

"Jehovah bless thee and keep thee. Jehovah make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

"I will put My name upon the Children of Israel; and I will bless them," said Jehovah.

For fourteen months the camp remained in the Plain of Sinai, and during that time, Moses instructed the people, and taught them many things; but at last the day came when a move was to be made. They were to go into the Wilderness of Paran, which lay somewhat south of Canaan and west of Edom, the Esau country.

The Tent of Meeting was taken down, and the Ark was carried by staves on the shoulders of the men. All followed in procession, according to their tribes, with their little ones, their flocks, and their herds. It must have been a wonderful sight to see them set forth to follow the mysterious cloud

We do not know whether Jethro, Moses' Father-in-law, had remained with them all the time that they were in Sinai—most probably not—but just now he was with them, and Moses appealed to him to follow with them. It was a mighty task for Moses to undertake, and he valued Jethro's friendship and counsel very highly.

"Come," said Moses to Jethro. "We are journeying unto the place of which Jehovah said, 'I will give it you.' Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for Jehovah has spoken good concerning Israel."

## A HAPPY PICTURE

Jethro urged that he must return to his own land and to his family, but Moses again said, "Leave me not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes."

We do not know whether Jethro consented to go, but we shall hope that he did help Moses for part of the journey.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE TRAGEDY AT KADESH BARNEA

THE time was fast approaching when the Children of Israel were to enter Canaan, and as they advanced along a good road from the south they at last reached Kadesh Barnea.

Kadesh Barnea was and is a very lovely spot, as Dr. Trumbull, an American traveller, describes it:

"It was a marvellous sight! Out from the barren and desolate stretch of the burning desert waste, we had come with magical suddenness into an oasis of verdure and beauty unlooked for, and hardly conceivable in such a region. A carpet of grass covered the ground. Fig trees, with fruit nearly ripe enough for eating, grew along the shelter of the southern hillside.

"Shrubs and flowers showed themselves in variety and profusion. Running water gurgled under the waving grass. There were flowers and grass and weeds, quite unlike anything we had seen in the peninsula of Sinai. Bees were humming, and birds were flitting from tree to tree. We started a hare. We saw larks and quails. It was in fact hard to realise that we were in the desert or near it."

It was to this beautiful spot that Moses led the people, and his heart must have been glad that the journey was so soon to be over, and that the Promised Land was close ahead of them. He now sent out twelve men to search Canaan, and spy out what it was like, and to bring him back a report.

Joshua and Caleb were amongst the spies, and the people waited anxiously for forty days until they returned. Here they come at

## THE TRAGEDY AT KADESH BARNEA

last! They are bringing a bunch of grapes from Eshcol, so large that two have to carry it on a staff, and marvellous pomegranates and figs are there also. The travellers reported that Canaan was indeed a land "flowing with milk and honey," which was a poetical way of saying that there was plenty of rich grass for the cattle and sheep, and flowers for the bees.

But all too soon the spies began to dash the hopes of the Israelites, and to fill them with terror. "The land," they reported, "was full of cities, walled and very great. There were giants in the land. The warlike Amalekites lived in the south, the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites lived amongst the high lands, and the Canaanites lived by the sea, and by the river Jordan."

Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said boldly, "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

But the other spies, with the exception of Joshua made answer, "We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. The sons of Anak come of giants, and we were as grasshoppers in our own and in their sight."

We must try to think out what a tremendous disappointment all this report was to the Israelites. In their grief, they lifted up their voices and wept, and wept all that night. In their rage, they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and cried, "Would God that we had died in Egypt or in the wilderness! And wherefore hath Jehovah brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return to Egypt?"

Then they said to one another, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the whole congregation, and Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes, as a sign of intense grief.

"The land which we passed through to search," they cried, "is an exceeding good land. If Jehovah delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us—a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against Jehovah, neither fear ye the people of the land. Jehovah is with us, fear them not!"

But in reply, the Congregation took up stones, to stone Joshua

## THE TRAGEDY AT KADESH BARNEA

and Caleb to death. Then, suddenly, the GLORY OF JEHOVAH appeared round about the Tent of Meeting.

"How long will this people provoke me?" said Jehovah to Moses. "I will smite them with pestilence, I will disinherit them, and I will make of thee, Moses, a greater nation and mightier than they."

But again Moses refused to think of his own honour, for it was the honour of Jehovah about which he cared.

Moses said to Jehovah, "Then the Egyptians shall hear it, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land; for they have heard that Thou, Jehovah, art among this people, and that Thy cloud standeth over them, and that Thou goest before them, by day-time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

"Now, if Thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations will say, 'Because Jehovah was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness.' And now, I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, 'Jehovah is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but Who cannot clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.'

"Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, even until now."

The plea was so great that Jehovah answered, "I have pardoned, according to thy word, but as truly as I live, and as all the world shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah, these men who have tempted me now these ten times shall not see the land. Only the little ones, which ye said would be a prey, will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."

So, though the sin was pardoned, the consequence of the sin remained. As the spies had searched for forty days, so now Jehovah decreed that the Children of Israel must wander in the wilderness for forty years, until the older generation had died out. Joshua and Caleb were exempted from punishment, as they had brought a faithful report, but the ten unfaithful spies died of the plague.

Yet in spite of this solemn warning, the Children of Israel

## THE TRAGEDY AT KADESH BARNEA

dared to disobey Jehovah. They rose up early in the morning, and told Moses that they acknowledged that they had sinned; but that now they were ready to go up into the land. In vain Moses warned them of their folly. They disobeyed him, and marched forward to the top of a hill. But the Ark still remained in the camp.

So it came about that a party of Amalekites and Canaanites fell upon the Israelitish rebels, and vanquished them. As for Moses, he acted nobly. He accepted the people's punishment as though it were his own, and he remained with them through their waiting time, a leader who might never actually lead them into the Promised Land.

Again in the Psalms we get a hint of Jehovah's grief, and his marvellous patience: "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation. It is a people that do err in their heart, for they have not known My ways."





## Part Five

### CHAPTER I

#### DURING THE FORTY YEARS

**W**E must now take some long strides in our Journey, for the Bible does not tell us a great deal as to what happened during the long period of wandering.

The years were far from happy at times, for there was rebellion and discontent. Even Miriam at one time turned against her brother, and had to be punished by Jehovah. Yet the Israelites remained together under the orders of Moses, and moved from place to place, or remained for long periods in camp, with the Tent of Meeting as a centre for worship and sacrifice.

When Miriam died she was buried with great honour, and, in spite of her rebellion, Moses must have felt sad indeed that the sister who had once watched over him, as he lay amongst the reeds of the Nile, had gone.

But now we come to a still more tragic event which hurts us, because it hurt Moses.

Trouble rose in the camp owing to shortness of water, and the

## DURING THE FORTY YEARS

people shouted with their usual impatience, "Would God that we had died when our brethren died before Jehovah! Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed or of figs, or of vines or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink."

It was the old story once more, and Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces, and the Glory of Jehovah appeared. Jehovah commanded Moses to take his rod, and gather the congregation before a rock.

A piece of the old manuscript which describes this incident has probably been lost or torn, so we cannot be quite certain what directions Jehovah gave as to the rod. But it is clear that Moses was to speak to the rock, so that it might bring forth water. Moses either lost his temper and struck the rock twice, or he dishonoured Jehovah by doubting His directions. The water flowed out abundantly, and the people and the beasts drank; but a doom fell upon Moses and Aaron for the way they had acted. Jehovah said that neither of them could now lead the people into the Promised Land.

In one of the Psalms we get a hint of what happened:

"The people angered Jehovah at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes; because they provoked his spirit, so that Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips."

We must notice that even though Moses himself had sinned, Jehovah did not spare him from suffering, even though He forgave him and still loved him. We are not told why Aaron might not enter the land, but it is clear that in some way he had shared in his brother's disobedience.

As the time drew near for going forward into Canaan, Moses wished to take the people by the east side of Jordan, through Edom, which was Esau's country. So he sent messengers to the King of Edom, explaining the position; for he had no wish to fight against the Edomites.

The Israelites were then in Kadesh, where they had been before when the first spies were sent out, and Moses asked of the king a great favour: "Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country; we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells; we will go by the king's



## DURING THE FORTY YEARS

highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders."

But the king of Edom answered roughly, "Thou shalt not pass through my country, lest I come out against thee with the sword."

But the messengers answered, "We will go by the highway, and if our people or our cattle drink of thy water, we will pay for it. We shall touch nothing, but go through on our feet."

But the king again refused, so the Children of Israel had to go round about Edom, until they arrived at a mountain called Hor. Hor has not been identified, but it interests us on our Journey, for it was at Hor that Jehovah decided that Aaron was to die, because of the part he had played at the "Waters of Strife." Aaron was the High Priest, and wore beautiful priestly robes, but now his son Eleazar was to be the High Priest in his father's place.

It was a solemn occasion, for all the people were gathered below, as Moses, Aaron, and Eleazar passed up the mountain. Moses stripped Aaron of his vestments, and placed them upon Eleazar, and Aaron died—or, as Jehovah said, "Aaron shall be gathered to his people."

When Moses and Eleazar came down the mountain, the people saw that Aaron was no longer with them, and they mourned for him for thirty days.

Some time later the camp moved, and we shall not be surprised to know that the people again grumbled and rebelled. They spoke against Jehovah and Moses, and cried, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness, for there is no bread, neither water, and our soul loatheth this light bread made of manna."

Then Jehovah sent poisonous serpents amongst them, and in their agony, they prayed once more to Jehovah. And Jehovah said unto Moses, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live."

So Moses did so, and those who looked at the brass serpent, in faith that Jehovah would heal them, were healed.

# THE STORY OF BALAAM

## CHAPTER 2

### THE STORY OF BALAAM

WE have now come to an old and finely-told story, and though it is not clear when it happened, we shall take it in this part of our Journey. It is considered to be partly a parable, partly most wonderful poetry, and partly prophecy.

As we travel on, we shall meet with prophets; Balaam was one who obeyed Jehovah, though he was not one of the Children of Israel. Jethro the Midianite, we shall remember, was also a worshipper of Jehovah.

The point of the story is that Balak, the King of Moab, was filled with consternation at the successes the Children of Israel had already had in battle against surrounding nations, and when they actually encamped on his own land, he said, "Now shall this company lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass in the field."

What was he to do? At that time there was a great belief in the power of the curse, and as Balak knew of a certain prophet or seer, named Balaam, he decided to send for him, and give him a handsome reward for cursing Israel. But the king had no idea that Balaam, whether he blessed or cursed, held himself under the orders of Jehovah.

Now, when Balaam heard what the messenger-princes had to say, he asked them to stay the night with him, so that he might find out what Jehovah wished him to do.

That night, Jehovah asked Balaam who the visitors were, and Balaam explained: "Balak, King of Moab, hath sent unto me saying, 'Behold there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth; come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall then prevail in battle and drive them out.'"

But God answered Balaam, "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed."

So next morning, when the princes heard the decision, they hurried off to their master and said to him, "Balaam refuses to come with us."

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But Balak now chose out some princes, even higher in rank than the first messengers, and when they arrived at Balaam's house they said, "Thus saith Balak, 'Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me. For I will promote thee to great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me.' Come therefore, and curse this people."

But Balaam answered, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God, to do less or more. Now, therefore, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what Jehovah will say to me."

That night, God spoke to Balaam and said, "If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; and yet only the word that I shall say unto thee, shalt thou speak."

So Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the Princes of Moab. Yet God was angry with Balaam for having persisted in wishing to go to Balak, even though He had given him permission. Balaam was riding upon his ass, and two servants with him, and the Princes were either in front of him or behind. Then Jehovah sent an angel to stand in Balaam's way to stop his journey.

And the ass saw the angel of Jehovah standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand, and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field; and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. But the angel of Jehovah stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; and he smote her again.

And the angel of Jehovah went further, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel, she fell down under Balaam. Then Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And Jehovah opened the mouth of the ass, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?"

"Because thou hast mocked me!" answered Balaam. "I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee."

And the ass said unto Balaam, "Am I not thine ass, upon which

## THE STORY OF BALAAM

thou hast ridden, ever since I was thine unto this day? Have I ever done like this before?"

And he answered, "Nay!"

Then Jehovah opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of Jehovah standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand, and Balaam bowed himself down.

And the angel said, "Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold I went out to be an adversary unto thee because thy way is perverse before me. The ass saw me, and turned from me these three times. Unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive."

And Balaam said to the angel, "I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me; now, therefore, if I am displeasing thee, I will get me back again."

But the angel answered, "Go with the men, but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak."

So Balaam went on with the princes to Balak.

Now when the King of Moab heard that Balaam was on the way, he went out to meet him and do him honour. Yet he reproached Balaam for not having come when first he sent for him.

"Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?" he asked.

But Balaam answered, "Lo, I am come unto thee; yet have I not any power to say any thing. The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."

On the morrow, Balak took Balaam to a high hill, on which there was a holy place for the god Baal.

Balak chose a hill, partly because the holy places of the gods were usually upon the hilltops, but also so that Balaam might see the Children of Israel as they encamped far below. Balaam instructed Balak to offer a great sacrifice of seven oxen and seven rams, on seven altars. On every altar a bullock and a ram.

"Now stand by thy burnt offering," said Balaam, "and I will go apart, peradventure Jehovah will come to meet me, and whatsoever He sheweth me, I will tell thee."

So Balaam went to a solitary place, and Balak waited anxiously, for the great curse against Israel. But when Balaam returned, he stood up and spoke words which terrified Balak.

"Balak the King of Moab hath brought me from Aram," he

## THE STORY OF BALAAM

cried, "out of the mountains of the east, saying, 'Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.' How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy those whom Jehovah hath not defied? For from the top of these rocks I see them . . . who can count up the dust of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like theirs."

Balak was indeed dismayed, for these words sounded like a blessing more than a curse. But Balaam reminded him that he had already warned him that he could only speak the words which Jehovah put in his mouth. Then Balak took Balaam to a different place, where he could not see quite so many of the Israelites, and there again he built seven altars and offered a bullock and a ram on every one.

So Balaam went away again, to get his message from Jehovah, and when he returned he found the sacrifices smoking and Balak and his princes standing round. "Rise up," he cried to Balak, "and hear! God is not a man that He should lie, neither a son of man that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

So again Balaam blessed the Children of Israel, and again Balak took him to yet another spot, and built seven altars and sacrificed seven bullocks and seven rams. But now Balaam knew that Jehovah did not wish to curse the Israelites, so, without going away, he turned and looked towards the wilderness, and spoke almost as though he were in a trance, or as though he were seeing a vision.

"Blessed is he that blesseth thee," he cried, "and cursed is he that curseth thee!"

We shall not be surprised that Balak was very angry, and he clasped his hands together in despair.

"I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast altogether blessed them, these three times. Therefore flee thou back to thy home. I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, Jehovah hath kept thee back from honour!"

But Balaam, in spite of Balak's contempt, uttered yet another great prophecy, and then turned and went back to his own country.

## THE DEATH OF MOSES

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE DEATH OF MOSES

MOSES was one hundred and twenty years old, Aaron and Miriam were dead, the older generation had died off, and the boys and girls who had tramped forth from Egypt were grown up.

Moses knew that his hour had come to lay down the leadership and to die, even though his strength was as great as when he was young, and his eyesight was still keen.

He had asked Jehovah, whom he called "The God of the spirits of all flesh," to choose out a leader for the people, and Jehovah had answered, "Take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that the Children of Israel may be obedient to him."

So the day came when Moses presented Joshua to the people as his successor, and many hearts must have felt very sad indeed.

"I am an hundred and twenty years old this day!" said Moses. "I can no more go out and come in. Also Jehovah hath said to me, 'Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.'

"Jehovah, thy God, He will go over before thee, and He will destroy these nations from before thee, and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as Jehovah said. Be strong and of a good courage. Fear not nor be afraid of them; for Jehovah thy God, He it is that doth go before thee. He will not fail nor forsake thee."

Moses warned the Children of Israel that, after he was gone, they would be unfaithful and do wrong things, and that they would bring down upon themselves endless trouble. But he also gave them words of hope and encouragement.

The people were encamped in the plain of Moab, and when Moses had finished speaking, and had said a last farewell to Joshua, to Eleazar and to many personal friends amongst the people, as we may be sure he did, he strode off with strong active steps up a mountain. Jehovah had called him for one last talk on earth before He took him through into the World Beyond.

## THE DEATH OF MOSES

The mountain, Nebo, was a hill in the Pisgah range, from which there was a wonderful view, and Jehovah told Moses to look round about him.

"This is the land," said Jehovah, "which I swore that I would give to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes; but thou shalt not go over thither."

Moses could look down at the forests, the grass lands, far away north to the snow-covered Hermon, southwards to the Jericho plain and the Dead Sea. The river Jordan flowed north and south. He could see the lands through which Abraham had first gone, and though he could not see the Sea of Galilee, because of a rocky ridge, he could see Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and, to his right, the Brook Jabbok, where Jacob had wrestled so mysteriously with Jehovah. So Moses, as he took this last vision of the Promised Land, was alone with Jehovah, and he was not afraid.

An old Jewish tradition tells us that "Moses died by the kiss of Jehovah," and our own story tells us:

"So Moses, the servant of Jehovah, died there, in the land of Moab, and Jehovah buried him in a valley in the land of Moab; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

We may unearth the Pharaohs, and unwind their embalmed bodies and exhibit them in our museums, but the place where Moses was buried is the secret of Jehovah.

The Children of Israel mourned and wept for Moses for thirty days, for "There arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses whom Jehovah knew face to face."

Let us take one forward glance to the days of Jesus. It was on a Mountain that Moses returned with the Prophet Elijah, whom we shall learn to know later. There Moses spoke with Jesus Himself. Moses still lives.





## Part Six

### CHAPTER I

#### JERICHO

**T**HE Children of Israel had been nearly forty years encamping in different parts of the peninsular of Sinai, after they left Egypt. Moses was dead, and Joshua was in command, and the camp was lying to the east of the river Jordan at Shittim, and the Promised Land lay across the river.

It is difficult to be quite sure from the Bible how many of the Children of Israel were there, for we get hints that some had already established themselves in the south, and some to the north-east of Jordan. The Canaan of Joshua's day was very different from the Canaan of the days of Abraham.

South of the camp lay the site of the destroyed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and we shall remember that when Abraham and his nephew, Lot, decided to separate their flocks and herds, the land was so unoccupied that they could go where they chose. But since then, nations and races had conquered and reconquered one another. Cities, which to-day we should call small towns, had grown up, and many were surrounded by walls; for the business of war had grown in fierceness.

We must realise that Babylon and Assyria lurked on the eastern borders, that Egypt was still powerful in the south-west, and that a new race, the Philistines, were encroaching along the coast of the Great Sea, and had built walled cities. Some years before this date, Canaan had been more or less united under the Hittites; but the Hittite power had been broken by Egypt, and now Canaan, having



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thrown off the yoke of Egypt, was divided up into tribes, each headed by a "king" or chieftain.

Idol worship and crime of every description reigned, and all through this unsettled time we read of war and massacre, cruelty, victory and defeat; and though it is hard for us to understand how the Children of Israel really thought that God wished them to do some of the things they did, we must remember that Jesus had not yet come down to earth, to teach men, women, and children that God is Love and is "Our Father." We can follow some of the stories of the "heroes" of this dreadful time, and when we wonder at some of the things they did, we must not judge them too harshly; but must say to ourselves that in those days they did not know any better.

Now, Joshua knew that he must make a base for his conquests from the west of Jordan, and that Jericho was the key city to be captured. Therefore he sent two men into the city to spy out its strength, and the men went to the house of a woman named Rahab, whose house was built on the wide wall that surrounded the city. But news soon reached the King of Jericho that spies from the dreaded Israelites had arrived, and he sent at once to Rahab and ordered her to bring out the men.

The woman, however, took the two spies and hid them, and she said to the king's officers, "There came men unto me, but I knew not from whence they came. And it came to pass that about the time of the shutting of the city gate, the men went out. Where the men went, I know not, but pursue after them quickly, for ye shall overtake them."

So the men pursued after them right to the Jordan fords, and as soon as the pursuers were gone, they shut the city gate. But Rahab had brought the men up to the roof of the house, and hidden them under the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof to dry, in preparation for her spinning. When it was safe, she went up to them, and spoke softly.

Why had Rahab risked her life for these men? Often, we wish the Bible could tell us a little more. All we do know is that Rahab had learnt to have faith in the Israelites' God. She had heard about these strange people, and something within her made her want to know this God and to obey Him.

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"I know," she said to the men, "that Jehovah hath given you **this land**, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land tremble because of you. Jehovah your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now, therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by Jehovah, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a sure proof of it. And that ye will save alive my father and my mother, and my brethren and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

And the men answered, "Our life instead of yours, so long as ye do not speak of this business. And it shall be that when Jehovah hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee."

Then Rahab let them down by a cord through the window, for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. And she said to them, "Get you to the mountains, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there for three days, until the pursuers be returned, and afterwards ye may go your way."

And the men said, "Behold when we come to Jericho, thou shalt bind this cord of scarlet in the window by which thou didst let us down; and thou shalt bring thy father and mother, thy brethren and all thy father's household home unto thee. And it shall be that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house, into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless; and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us swear."

And Rahab answered, "According to your word, so be it!" Then Rahab sent away the men, and she bound the scarlet cord in the window.

The spies took Rahab's advice, and remained hidden for three days in the mountains, and then managed to pass over the Jordan, and report to Joshua. "Truly," they said, "Jehovah hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the people do tremble on account of us."

Next morning, the whole camp moved from Shittim to the banks of the Jordan, opposite to Jericho. The river was in full

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flood, for though it was hot weather and harvest time in March and April, this rapid river, which had in some parts a fall of sixty feet to the mile, was fed from living springs from the snow-covered Hermon range, which melted under the hot sun and kept the river high. The Israelites must have wondered how they could get across, and some must have remembered what happened at the Red Sea

Three days later, the procession set out. The priests, who belonged to the tribe of Levi, went first, carrying the golden Ark, and they had orders to stand still when they reached the brink of the river.

"Come hither!" cried Joshua, "and hear the word of Jehovah. Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will not fail to drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan."

As the Priests' feet touched the water, it came to pass that the flow of water was blocked from the north some distance up the river, and the water to the south ran away into the Dead Sea, leaving the ground clear across the bed of the Jordan. The Priests with the Ark now waited until all had passed over, with the cattle, the sheep, the asses, and the stores. Then they passed over. And as soon as the Priests with the Ark were safely across, the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and overflowed its banks as before.

Twelve stones, which had been taken from the bed of the river, were set up in Gilgal, which was now the headquarters of the Israelites, and Joshua said, "When your children shall ask their fathers in times to come, saying, 'What mean ye by these stones?' then ye shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For Jehovah your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as Jehovah did to the Red Sea which He dried up before us, until we were gone over.' That all the people of the earth might know the hand of Jehovah, that it is mighty; that ye might fear Jehovah your God for ever."

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We are told that the people ate of the old corn of the land after they had passed over Jordan. They held a Passover Feast, and the manna by which they had been fed throughout their wanderings now ceased.

## CHAPTER 2

### A VISION

THE great campaign was about to start, and one day, as Joshua was walking alone near Jericho, he looked up and noticed a man standing beyond him, with his sword drawn in his hand. Joshua advanced fearlessly and said, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"

And the man answered, "Nay, but as Prince of the host of Jehovah am I now come!"

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, and said unto him, "What saith my lord unto his servant?"

And the Prince of Jehovah's host said to Joshua, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy."

And Joshua did so.

We are not told what the Prince of Jehovah's host said to Joshua, but we may be sure that his heart was cheered.

## CHAPTER 3

### IN RAHAB'S HOUSE

THE news of the crossing of the Jordan had reached Jericho, and the king and his people were in a state of the greatest terror. They had closed the gates of the city, and would not allow any one to pass either in or out.

Rahab, on looking out early one morning, saw a strange sight.

## IN RAHAB'S HOUSE

Outside the walls of Jericho there were soldiers armed with swords, shields, bows and arrows, marching silently below her window. Then there followed priests, dressed in white, bearing a strange and marvellous golden box, and the rising sun shone on the wings of the golden cherubim which stretched across the lid. Then more soldiers followed. No word was spoken; but suddenly the priests blew their rams'-horns, with loud and challenging blasts which all the city could hear. The fight was surely beginning, and it was time for Rahab to gather all her family into her house.

But soon afterwards the soldiers and the priests marched away. What could it mean? The procession passed in the same mysterious way for five more mornings. It was a demonstration against the city, a challenge to them to surrender.

On the seventh day the procession went round the city seven times, and the trumpets were blown. Up till then Joshua had commanded the people to keep utter silence, but at last he commanded the people to shout, crying that Jehovah had given them the city. He warned them that the city was "devoted," which they understood to mean that it must not be looted for private gain. All was set apart for God, and was to be utterly destroyed or consecrated to God. If any man took anything from Jericho for himself he and his would share the fate of the city. The silver and the gold, and vessels of brass and iron, were to come into the treasury of Jehovah. Only Rahab and all in the house with her were to be spared and rescued from utter destruction.

So the trumpets blew and the people shouted and the walls "fell down flat" as the old Hebrew writer expresses it, and the soldiers rushed into the city, and gained a great victory. They killed every living thing, and burned the place with fire. We do not quite know what the early writer meant by the walls falling down flat; but Rahab's house still stood, and at the command of Joshua she and all her family were saved.

The strange part of this story is, that Rahab, though of a Canaanitish family, believed in Jehovah the God of the Hebrews. She married a Hebrew named Salmon, who may have been one of the very spies she had saved. That we do not know, but she became the great-great-grandmother of David the King, and was an ancestress of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

## JOSHUA'S FAREWELL

### CHAPTER 4

#### JOSHUA'S FAREWELL

**THE** history of the Children of Israel is very different from other national histories, and the reason is this: other national writers are apt to do their best to show the glorious and honourable side of their kings and rulers and peoples, so that we may continually admire. They are anxious to hide away the weaknesses and the evil-doings.

But in the Bible, the wrong-doings and the wickednesses are told as clearly as the noble and wonderful parts, and this proves how human and genuine these stories are. Even the noblest of the National leaders often misunderstood what Jehovah wished them to do, and did things which we should now call cruel, because they believed quite honestly that they were obeying Jehovah's commands. We must be careful to remember this, as we travel along with these ancient peoples, and we must never think hard thoughts of Jehovah, because the people made mistakes as to what they thought Jehovah had commanded them to do.

A verse in one of the Psalms will help us here.

"Like as a Father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust."

After the fall of Jericho, Joshua led the people to many a victory, but as he grew old, and his time came to die, he was not at all satisfied. The people were often disobedient, and their worst sin was that they turned away from the laws and teachings of Moses, and refused to submit to Jehovah the Invisible, and chose to worship the gods of wood and stone of the Canaanitish tribes. Had they been true to Jehovah, and loved Him with all their hearts and strength, our journey with them would have been very different.

It was in vain that Joshua warned them of the troubles that would fall upon them if they forsook Jehovah, and there came a day when he offered the Children of Israel a great choice. By this time, the tribes of Judah and Simeon were settled more or less in





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## JOSHUA'S FAREWELL

the south, and the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had been allowed to settle on the east side of the Jordan. Joshua's conquests were principally in the central part of Canaan, and he had established the Tent of Meeting at Shiloh, and placed the sacred ark within it, so that the people might gather there for sacrifice and worship. But we shall soon see in the stories that follow how unsettled the whole land was.

Abraham first stayed at Shechem on his way from Haran, and it was here that Joshua gathered the people, that he might give them a strong and earnest word of warning.

"I am old, and am going the way of all the earth," he said, and then he reminded them of all their past history since they came out of Egypt. Joshua had indeed been a very young man when he passed through the Red Sea, and he pleaded with the people to make their choice.

"I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and the olive-yards which ye planted not do ye eat. Now, therefore, fear Jehovah and serve him in all sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the Jordan and in Egypt, and serve ye Jehovah.

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah!"

The people were impulsive enough, and moved by Joshua's appeal, they shouted eagerly:

"God forbid that we should forsake Jehovah to serve other gods. For Jehovah our God, He it is that brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt. We also will serve Jehovah, for He is our God."

Then Joshua warned them for the last time, as he reminded them that Jehovah was a jealous God, which meant that Jehovah could not admit any rival god in his presence.

"If ye forsake Jehovah, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt; and consume you, after that He hath done you good."

And the people cried still more eagerly, "Nay, but we will serve Jehovah."

## JOSHUA'S FAREWELL

Then Joshua said solemnly, "Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen Jehovah to serve him!"

"We are witnesses!" they answered.

"Now put away the strange gods that are amongst you, and turn again to Jehovah the God of Israel!"

"Jehovah our God, will we serve!" they promised, "and His voice will we obey."

So Joshua wrote down the promise, and raised a great stone and placed it under an oak. "Behold," he said, "this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of Jehovah which He spake unto us. It shall be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God."

Before Joshua's death, the bones of Joseph which had been embalmed in Egypt, and which had been brought into Canaan, were buried in a piece of land which Jacob had once bought of the dwellers in Shechem, and which became the inheritance of the sons of Joseph.

When Joshua died, he was buried with all honour, for many loved him and mourned for him; for there were those who did truly wish to serve Jehovah, and with Joshua, the great leader, dead, they must have known how difficult it would be. Eleazar, the son of Aaron, died also, and his son Phinehas took his place as High Priest.

We are sad to read that though the people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and of the elders who outlived Joshua, the new generations which did not remember the works Jehovah had performed for His people, forsook Him and followed the worship of the gods of the country in which they found themselves. They served Baal and the goddess Ashtaroth, and it came about that the hand of Jehovah was often against these foolish and guilty people, and yet His heart was sorry for them, and time after time He raised up those able to deliver them. He heard their groanings, when the nations round about oppressed them, but He did not drive out the nations, but left them to test the Children of Israel as to whether or not they would serve Him in truth. We must now follow the stories of some of the leaders whom Jehovah raised up.



## Part Seven

### CHAPTER I

#### DEBORAH

**D**EBORAH the Prophetess flashes out upon us, like a surprising light in the dark days when the Israelites were struggling for a foothold in Canaan. Those were the days, it was said, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This meant that there was no national law, nor obedience to God.

Jehovah had called out Israel that He might be their leader—their king—but alas they were very slow to learn that lesson. But there must have been many faithful hearts even in those sad days, and Deborah's was one of them. She was the wife of a man named Lapidoth, and she "sat under the palm tree of Deborah."

This does not seem much to know of any one, yet Deborah must have been an important person, for the very tree under which she sat became noted. Deborah lived between Bethel, where Jacob once slept and had his vision of the ladder rising to heaven, and Ramah, which was five miles from the city afterwards to be called Jerusalem. Now, Deborah was a good woman, according to the light she had, and feared Jehovah, and was greatly distressed at what she saw others doing. She made herself so learned in what Law she had, that the people readily acknowledged that she was wise,

## DEBORAH

and it was no wonder that they came to her to judge and decide their disputes, and to learn about Jehovah. Now, at this time, Deborah's heart was especially sore. The people had sinned and forsaken Jehovah, and were boldly worshipping the gods of Canaan. So Jehovah allowed them to be oppressed by a great Captain named Sisera, who commanded nine hundred chariots of iron.

Before we travel farther, it is important that we should study the map and become quite familiar with the country. We shall then find the stories much more real, and, as the names of places, rivers, and mountains occur over and over again, we shall know where we are, if we are clear about the geography. After all, Canaan was about the size of Wales, and a motor-car can run from north to south in a day. But it seemed much larger in the early Bible times, for there were few roads, and all travelling was done on foot, by mule and, at best, by horse.

Sisera lived at Harosheth in the north-west, near Carmel, and the river Kishon runs almost east and west a little to the south. We must also notice Mount Tabor rising to the north-east, overlooking the plain. The Israelites, in their distress, had begun to cry to Jehovah for help, and it came into Deborah's heart that she must do what she could.

Deborah knew of a good soldier named Barak, who lived at Kedesh-Naphtali, south-east of Harosheth. (This is not the Kadesh in the south where the Israelites stayed on their journeyings.) So Deborah sent for Barak, and he went off to her at once, wondering what she could wish to say to him.

We can imagine the soldier and the prophetess talking together under the tree, and lamenting over the troubles of their people. But Deborah was soon giving instructions. "Hath not Jehovah commanded, saying, 'Go to Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun'?"

These tribes had settled in the north, to the west and south of the lake afterwards called the Sea of Galilee.

Deborah had more of the plan to unfold. She wished to draw Sisera from Harosheth, over the river Kishon, and when they had reached the plain, Barak and his army were to swoop down upon them from Mount Tabor, to cut off their retreat.

## DEBORAH

Then Barak said to the prophetess, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go."

Deborah answered the nervous soldier quietly enough, "I will surely go with thee; notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for Jehovah will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

So Deborah altered the plan somewhat, and she went with Barak to Kedesh, and having rallied the tribes, they went up Mount Tabor. Sisera soon heard the news, and he gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river Kishon.

And as they reached the lower ground, Deborah cried, "Up, for this is the day in which Jehovah hath delivered Sisera into thine hand; is not Jehovah gone out before thee?"

The army of Barak was encouraged in knowing that the Prophetess was amongst them, and Barak had no difficulty in rushing them down the mountain against the powerful and well-armed foe.

The victory was complete. Sisera leaped from his chariot, and fled away on foot, and a thunderstorm which brought the river Kishon out in flood helped the defeat. This river, a traveller tells us, "in ordinary times is but a small brook; but can become in a storm a roaring tropical river. It sweeps on with resistless force, forming quicksands and marshes, into which horses sink knee-deep."

So we can imagine the awful confusion when Sisera's clumsy chariots and their terrified horses plunged into the swamps.

Barak and his men pursued the flying army as far as Harosheth, but Sisera fled northwards to Kedesh, and took refuge with a Kenite tribe. Heber, the Kenite, was away, but his wife, Jael, came out to meet the exhausted Captain.

"Turn in, my lord!" she said. "Turn in and fear not!" And when Sisera had entered the tent, he lay down and she covered him.

"Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink," he pleaded, "for I am thirsty."

Now, had Jael given him water, she could not have killed him

## DEBORAH

as she intended, without breaking the laws of hospitality, so she gave him a bowl of milk or curds.

"Stand in the door of the tent," he said, "and it shall be that when any man doth come and inquire of thee and say, 'Is there any man here?' that thou shalt say, 'No.'"

Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples and fastened it into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary; so he died.

And behold as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said:

"Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest." And when he came into her tent, behold Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples.

The SONG OF DEBORAH is one of the oldest pieces of literature in the Bible, and is full of poetry and gives us a peep into the Hebrew ideas of those times. Here is a short piece of the song, and we shall notice that the story of what Jael actually did is a little different from the prose story:

They fought from heaven. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

The river Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon.

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be. Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

He asked water, and she gave him milk. She brought forth curds in a lordly dish.

She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer, and with the hammer she smote Sisera.

She smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice—

"Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?"

## DEBORAH

Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself:

“Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two? To Sisera coloured garments of fine needlework, fit for the necks of them that take spoil?”  
So let all thine enemies perish, O Jehovah! But let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

## CHAPTER 2

### GIDEON

THE Children of Israel did evil in the sight of Jehovah, and Jehovah delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel; and because of the Midianites, the Children of Israel made themselves strongholds in the dens and caves of the mountains. And so it was that when Israel had sown, the Midianites and others came up and encamped and were as grasshoppers for multitude, for they and their camels were without number, and they left no sustenance for the Children of Israel.

These Midianites were descended from Midian, the son of Keturah, the wife whom Abraham married after Sarah died. They had intermarried with the descendants of Ishmael, so sometimes they were called Ishmaelites. They spoke the same sort of language as the Israelites, and lived a wild desert life, wandering where they pleased and robbing what they could. They were the forefathers of the Arabs of to-day.

The Midianites gave the Israelites a terrible time, for just as the crops were ready to be reaped they arrived with their cattle and flocks, and camels without number. The beasts devoured the harvests, and the Midianites raided the cattle or drove the Israelites off from the best pastures, so that they were forced to the high lands.

We can imagine how maddening such an enemy was, and the Israelites became so poor and wretched that they cried out to Jehovah, whom they had been despising and disgracing through

## GIDEON

their idol-worship. So Jehovah sent a prophet, whose name we do not know, and explained why it was that they had fallen into such distress.

"Thus saith the Jehovah God of Israel," said the Prophet, "'I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage. And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land. And I said unto you, "I am Jehovah your God; worship not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell"; but ye have not obeyed My voice.'"

This message from the unknown Prophet interests us, as it shows that here and there amongst the disobedient people there were those who were faithful to Jehovah.

There was one man named Gideon, of the tribe of Manasseh, who knew only too well how true the Prophet's words were, and he was full of sadness. His own father, Joash, had set up an idol of Baal, and, by its side, a sacred pole called the Asherah. Baal is a title, meaning Lord, or Owner, and there were many Baals in Canaan and the countries round about. He was usually represented by an altar and a pillar called the Massebah. The Asherah was the goddess, who stood for fruitfulness, and stood in the form of a wooden pole.

We shall find from now onwards that the leaders and prophets were continuously preaching and warning against the worship of Baal and the Asherah, set up on the high places of the land.

One day Gideon, having reaped his father's field, was busy threshing out the corn. Instead of taking it to a height, where the wind would blow away the chaff, he had to go down into the vineyard, and do his threshing behind the wine press.

But some time later, as he stopped threshing, he looked up and saw the vision of an Angel sitting under an oak, or a sacred turpentine tree.

"Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valour!" said the Angel.

Gideon was amazed, for he could not feel like a mighty man of valour, hiding in the vineyard; yet at the Angel's words he burst forth with the burning question in his heart.



## GIDEON

"Oh, my Lord," he cried, "if Jehovah be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of saying, 'Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt?' But now Jehovah hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

The Angel, who was Jehovah Himself, looked upon Gideon and answered, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"

And Gideon said "Oh, my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

And Jehovah answered, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

And Gideon said, "If now I have found grace in Thy sight, then show me a sign that Thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray Thee, until I come unto Thee, and bring forth my meat-offering and set it before Thee."

And Jehovah answered, "I will tarry until thou come again."

And Gideon went in and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes. The flesh he put in a basket, and he put broth in a pot, and brought it out unto the Angel and presented it to him.

And the Angel said to him, "Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon the rock and pour out the broth."

And Gideon did so. Then the Angel of Jehovah put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the Angel of Jehovah departed out of Gideon's sight.

And when Gideon understood that he was an Angel of Jehovah, Gideon cried, "Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen an Angel of Jehovah face to face."

And Jehovah said to him, "Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die!"

So Gideon built an altar to Jehovah, and called it "Jehovah-Shalom" which meant "Jehovah send peace."

But that very night Jehovah spoke to Gideon, and told him what he must do. The task Jehovah had set him was too dangerous to do in daylight, so he rose at once, and, choosing ten of his

## GIDEON

servants, set forth through the night and reached the hill on which was erected the altar of Baal and the Asherah.

They broke down the altar, hacked up the Asherah, and then, having built an altar to Jehovah and sacrificed a kid upon it, they went quietly home. Early next morning, there was great excitement when the people came out from the city to pay their worship to Baal and the Asherah. Baal's altar was gone, so was the Asherah, and the sacrifice to Jehovah was burning!

"Who hath done this?" they cried, one to another.

"Gideon, the son of Joash hath done it!" said some one.

With one accord the people rushed off in a tumult to Joash and demanded that he should bring Gideon out that they might kill him. But Joash was a shrewd man, and he answered them wisely, "Will ye plead for Baal? Will ye save Baal? If Baal be a god, let him plead for himself against him who has cast down his altar."

Thus it was that Gideon honoured Jehovah, and the people in their hearts knew that he was right.

When, some time afterwards, Gideon blew the war-trumpet, these very people were the first to answer his call. The cause was urgent, for the Midianites, Amalekites, and Children of the East had gathered and pitched in the valley of Jezreel, which we shall find to the south-east of Kedesh, Barak's country. Gideon sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and to the Northern tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they gathered under his leadership. But before Gideon started on his venture he pleaded with Jehovah to give him one sign, that he might be sure that He was with him.

"If Thou wilt save Israel by my hand," said Gideon, "behold I will put a fleece of wool on the ground, and if the dew be on the fleece only, and if it be dry upon all the earth outside, then shall I know that Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as Thou hast said."

So Gideon put out the fleece, and rose up early on the morrow, and pressed the fleece together, and wrung out a bowl of water.

Yet still Gideon was not quite satisfied, and he said to God, "Let not Thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once. Let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew."

And God did so that night; for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

## THE STRANGE BATTLE

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE STRANGE BATTLE

GIDEON was proud indeed of the mighty host that had collected at his call, and as he looked towards the Midianite army, camping north of him, he felt that indeed Jehovah was with him. But now, to Gideon's amazement, Jehovah told him that his army was too large, for if they conquered they would say, "Mine own arm hath saved me!"

"Go, therefore," said Jehovah, "and proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, 'Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return home.'"

So twenty-two thousand returned, and ten thousand remained. Gideon must have thought this a dreadful catastrophe, but he was more than ever astonished when Jehovah told him that the ten thousand were still too many.

"Bring the people down to the water," said Jehovah, "and I will try them for thee there. And it shall be that of whom I say unto thee 'This shall go with thee,' the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say 'This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.'"

So Gideon brought down the people to the water, and Jehovah said, "Everyone that lappeth with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself. Likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink."

And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men; and all the rest bowed down upon their knees to drink. "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you," said Jehovah, "and deliver the Midianites into thine hand; let all the other people go every man to his place."

So Gideon sent all except the three hundred back to their tents, and he and the three hundred camped upon a hillside from which they could see the Midianites in the valley. But Jehovah understood that Gideon's heart might fail him, and that night He spoke to him.

"Arise," He said, "get thee down unto the host. I have delivered

## THE STRANGE BATTLE

it into thy hand. But if thou fear to go down, take Phurah thy servant, and thou shalt hear what they say, and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened."

So Gideon called Phurah, and they went down the hill towards the camp. The Midianites lay along in the valley like a swarm of locusts, and their camels were as the sand of the sea-shore for multitude. But Gideon and his servant drew so near that they heard one of the men telling a dream to his fellow.

Gideon could understand what was said, for the languages of the Midianites and the Israelites were allied. "I dreamed," said the man, "and lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came into a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, and the tent lay along."

And the other answered: "Thus is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host."

Then Gideon turned away and worshipped Jehovah in his heart, for he was sure now that Jehovah was with him. He called up his three hundred men, and provided them with trumpets, empty pitchers, or jars, and lamps, and gave them instructions:

"Look on me, and do as I do, when ye come to the outside of the camp. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye with the trumpets."

They were to encircle the camp silently.

And when the moment came, the three companies blew with their trumpets, broke the pitchers, so that the light shined out, and shouted, "The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon!"

They stood still in their places, round the camp, but the terrified Midianites ran and cried and fled, and Jehovah set every man's sword against his fellow. They fled south-eastwards to the border of Abel-meholah, and the men of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh rallied to the pursuit, and Gideon sent messengers to the Ephraimites to catch them as they crossed the Jordan.

The Ephraimites obeyed, and killed two Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb, and brought their heads in triumph to Gideon. At first the Ephraimites complained bitterly to Gideon that they had not been called at the beginning, but Gideon answered them gently, and gave them the honour of having done more than he

## THE STRANGE BATTLE

had done by slaying the princes. The name Oreb meant Raven, and Zeeb meant a Wolf.

It was later that Gideon came up with the two kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, who had taken a great part in the battle. He discovered that they had slaughtered all his brothers, so he called upon Jether his own first-born son to slay the kings. But Jether hung back, for he was but a youth.

Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise thou and fall upon us, for as the man is, so is his strength." So Gideon slew the kings, and the victory was complete.

The Israelites took a quantity of spoil, for the Midianites liked to wear ornaments, and they even put chains of gold about their camels' necks. The people, in gratitude to Gideon, wanted there and then to make him their king, but he answered, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you. Jehovah shall rule over you."

At Gideon's request, however, the people handed over to him the golden ornaments they had taken from the Midianites, and with the gold Gideon made an idol. Like Aaron in the Wilderness he made a great mistake. This idol was not like Baal, but it turned the hearts of the people from the worship of an Invisible God once again, and it became in the end a public danger.

## CHAPTER 4

### JEPHTHAH

THE years passed, and time after time the Israelites disobeyed Jehovah; and over and over again He allowed their enemies to triumph, and over and over again came to their help in their distresses.

We remember that some of the Israelite tribes lived on the east side of Jordan, and it came about that the Ammonites not only oppressed these tribes but passed across Jordan and attacked the central tribes and Judah in the south. The Ammonites were the descendants of Lot, whom we shall remember at an early stage in our Journey.

## JEPHTHAH

Clearly the Israelites, in spite of their idolatry, were sure at the bottom of their hearts that Jehovah was their God, and now they cried to Him, hoping that He would yet again deliver them.

"We have sinned against Thee!" they cried; "both because we have forsaken God, and because we have served Baal."

And Jehovah answered:

"Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, from the Amorites, the Children of Ammon, the Philistines, the Zidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites? And ye cried unto Me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken Me, and served other gods; therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation."

And the Children of Israel answered, "We have sinned; do Thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto Thee; deliver us only, we pray Thee, this day."

So they put away the strange gods, and worshipped Jehovah, and the soul of Jehovah was grieved for the misery of Israel.

Now, the Children of Ammon were encamped in Gilead, which we shall find on the east of the Jordan, and the Children of Israel were encamped in Mizpeh, somewhat to the south. The princes of Gilead said to one another, "What man is he that will begin to fight against the Children of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

They had the army, but the trouble was that they had no leader. Now there lived a valiant fighter named Jephthah, who had been driven from his father's house by his brothers, and was now a captain over a band of rough men who went out plundering with him. The Princes of Gilead remembered Jephthah, and sent for him. "Come and be our captain," they said, "that we may fight the Children of Ammon."

But Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did ye not hate me and expel me out of my father's house? Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?"

This was an awkward question for the elders to answer; but at last, after they had promised to place Jephthah at their head, he agreed to take charge and lead them out to battle.

Jephthah's first act was to send a challenge to the King of

## JEPHTHAH

Ammon, demanding how he dared to enter the land, and the King of Ammon replied with the argument that the land was his.

Jephthah urged that he did no wrong to the King of Ammon in claiming the land and said, "Jehovah be the judge this day, between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon."

But before Jephthah led out his army, he vowed a vow to Jehovah, and said, "If Thou shalt not fail to deliver the Children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of my doors of my house to meet me, shall surely be Jehovah's and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

Vows were common in those days, as a kind of bargain with a god, and Jephthah made this vow to Jehovah quite honestly, with all his heart, not thinking that he was doing anything wrong.

The Children of Israel were victorious, and when the battle was over, Jephthah returned back to his home in Mizpeh. His only daughter, having heard of the triumph, made ready to welcome her father, and she hurried out to meet him, playing her timbrels and dancing a dance of pure happiness. But when Jephthah caught sight of her, he stopped short. All his joy vanished. His heart sank. He tore his clothes in agony.

What of the vow he had made to Jehovah? Yet it does not seem to have occurred to him to go back from it.

"Alas, my daughter!" he cried, as she knelt before him, "thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto Jehovah, and I cannot go back."

Then the young girl understood the doom that hung over her. Yet she showed herself brave and not afraid.

"My father," she said quietly, "do to me according to thy vow, forasmuch as Jehovah hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the Children of Ammon."

What could Jephthah say? She was his only child, and, beside her, he had neither son nor daughter. The girl made one request. she asked that she might go away for two months to the mountains with her maidens, after which she promised to return to her father.

After two months had passed, Jephthah's daughter returned to

## JEPHTHAH

her father, and the Bible tells us that "He did unto her according to his vow."

It appears as though Jephthah actually killed his daughter and sacrificed her to Jehovah. But such sacrifices had been strictly forbidden by Moses, and some think that this young girl's fate was to remain unmarried and be dedicated to Jehovah for the rest of her life.

## CHAPTER 5

### SAMSON

THE very name "Samson" has come to mean a "strong man," and Samson, of the tribe of Dan, was the strong man of Israel. His parents had been told by Jehovah that he would help to deliver Israel from the Philistines who were now domineering over them, and that they must bring him up strictly as a Nazarite. This meant that he must not touch the juice of the grape, even though his home was amongst the vineyards, nor certain kinds of food, and that no razor must touch his hair on his head or on his face. If this vow was faithfully kept, Jehovah promised the parents that their son should "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

So we must imagine Samson as a man of marvellous athletic strength, with hair growing to a great length, and with his face heavily bearded.

Samson's story is a sad one, because though he was destined for a great task, he only worked at it by fits and starts, as he was far too fond of pleasure and of enjoying himself. Though he did many exciting things they were not great national deeds, and as we travel on we shall find that the Philistines still dominated the Israelites, so we have to confess that Samson was one of the giant failures of history.

But who were the Philistines?

They lived principally on the sea coast to the south and west of Canaan, and had increased greatly in power. Philistia, through which runs the "Way of the Philistines" was a glorious land for



## SAMSON

fruit and corn, and the Philistines had grown rich and built themselves strong cities. They carried on trade along the coast sea, and even traded in slaves. By this time they had become the torment of the Israelites, for they raided them and robbed them of their crops, and they garrisoned some of the higher lands, so that they might keep the people in terror. No road was safe from them, and trading became almost impossible.

On the other hand, we also find them living side by side with the Israelites, not recognising any boundaries, and Samson's first adventure came about because he was visiting a place named Timnath, where he saw a beautiful Philistine maiden, with whom he fell in love. Though he had not yet spoken to her he was full of eagerness for the marriage, and he hurried back to his parents, to ask them to arrange it—as was, we know, the custom.

But his parents were greatly distressed that their son, whom they had dedicated to Jehovah, should marry a Philistine maiden.

“Is there never a woman amongst the daughters of thy people, that thou dost wish to marry a Philistine?” they asked him.

But Samson had another purpose in mind, besides marriage. He was bent upon seeking some chance of picking a quarrel with the Philistine neighbours. So off he set again for Timnath, and as he passed along, a young lion sprang out at him from one of the vineyards, and roared at him. But the “Spirit of Jehovah” was so strong in Samson that, though he had no weapon, he seized the lion and tore it in pieces, as though it had been a young kid.

At Timnath he found a chance of speaking to the beautiful Philistine maiden, and she pleased him more and more. Samson was quite determined to marry her, and again he returned to his parents, to gain their consent.

On his way home, he turned aside out of curiosity to see what had happened to the carcass of the lion, for the vultures would be sure to have picked off and devoured all the flesh. He found the skeleton, and was amazed to notice that a swarm of bees had made their nest there, and finding honey, he scraped it out, and ate some himself and brought some to his father and mother. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.

Samson now persuaded his parents to let him marry the Philistine, so, with thirty companions, he went off to Timnath

## SAMSON

with his parents, and made a great wedding feast, to which many of the Philistines were invited.

In the east it is common to ask riddles, and during the feast, Samson thought of one. "I will now put forth a riddle unto you," he said to the guests, "if ye can certainly declare it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment. But if ye cannot guess it, then shall ye give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment."

The guests were eager enough to accept the bargain, and they said: "Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it!"

And Samson said unto them:

"Out of the eater came forth meat.

Out of the strong came forth sweetness."

Some of us may be able to guess this riddle, for we know about the lion, the "eater," and about the honey, the "sweetness." But none of the guests, not even Samson's parents, could guess what he meant. For three days they discussed it, and could think of no answer, so they decided to go to Samson's young wife, and persuade her to get the answer from her husband, so that she might give it to them.

"Indeed," they said sternly, "if you go not get us the answer we will burn you and your father's house with fire."

So Samson's wife wept before Samson, begging him to tell her the answer to the riddle. "Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not," she complained. "Thou hast put forth a riddle to my people, and hast not told it unto me!"

"Behold, I have not told it to my father and my mother!" replied Samson; "and shall I tell it to thee?"

Yet his wife went on worrying him to tell her the answer, almost to the end of the feast, and at last Samson, strong man as he was, could not withstand her, and he told her the riddle. Of course, as we shall expect, she went straight off and told the answer to the Philistines.

So on the seventh day of the feast the guests came to Samson in triumph and gave him the answer.

"What is sweeter than honey?"

What is stronger than a lion?"

## SAMSON

Samson frowned, and told them that he knew well how they had found out his secret. There was but one way of getting the thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment, to fulfil his side of the bargain. He must get them from the Philistines.

So Samson set forth to the Philistine city of Ashkelon, and the "Spirit of Jehovah" came upon him, and Samson slew thirty Philistines, and, stripping off their clothes, he sent them to the Philistine guests. He was so angry however, that he did not return to his wife, but went straight off to his father's house.

And though Samson did not know this at the time, the father of his wife gave her in marriage to another.

## CHAPTER 6

### SAMSON'S REVENGE

SHORTLY afterwards, Samson went to visit his wife. He took her a present of a kid, and he was utterly surprised when his wife's father refused to let him enter the house.

The father explained that he thought Samson must have hated his wife, as he had gone away, so he had given her to another.

"But I will give you her sister, who is more beautiful than she," he added, perhaps because he saw wrath blazing in this giant Israelite's eyes.

Samson made his plans very carefully. He snared three hundred foxes, and one night he tied them tail to tail, and put a lighted brand between each pair, and set them loose in the harvest lands. They burnt up the standing corn, the shocks, and even the vineyards and the olive plantations.

Then the Philistines cried out in amazement, "Who hath done this?"

"Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to another!" they were told.

So in revenge for the damage to their crops, they rushed to the house of Timnath, set it on fire and destroyed the house, the father, and the daughter. But Samson now attacked the Philistines, and, after killing many of them, he escaped and encamped on the rock

## SAMSON'S REVENGE

**Etam.** This rock can be identified to-day, and the cave can be seen where it is possible that Samson lived, as he waited for his chance to do more damage to his enemies.

The Philistines, by this time, hated Samson, and planned to get hold of him. But the Israelites round about, and especially men of the tribe of Judah, who were settled in that part, were terrified at hearing what Samson had done. Instead of being glad, they were dismayed because he had stirred their over-lords to anger.

Three thousand of them came to Samson to remonstrate with him. "Knowest thou not," they said, "that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us?"

"As they did unto me, so have I done unto them!" answered Samson.

But the men of Judah answered, "We are come to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines!"

"Swear to me that ye will not fall upon me yourselves," said Samson.

"No—but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand, and surely we will not kill thee."

So Samson allowed himself to be bound with two new cords, and was taken off by the treacherous Judahites to the Philistines, who were at a place called Lehi.

When the prisoner arrived, the Philistines shouted with triumph. But the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon Samson, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. He had no weapon with which to strike, but noticing the jaw bone of an ass, left by the vultures, he seized it, and killed a thousand men, and the rest fled in terror.

As Samson gazed about him, he cried triumphantly:

"With the jaw bone of an ass! Heaps upon heaps!  
With the jaw bone of an ass, I have slain a thousand  
men!"

But, left alone, his courage ebbed away, for he was horribly thirsty, and could see no water.

"Oh, Jehovah!" he cried: "thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of Thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hands of these heathen?"

## SAMSON'S REVENGE

But Jehovah brought forth water from a spring, and when Samson had drunk he felt strengthened once more.

On one occasion when Samson ventured right into the Philistine city of Gaza, the elders shut the city gates, determined to catch him. But at midnight he went up to the gate, which was what we should call a porch, with a room or rooms on the top of it. Under the porch there were great wooden doors, bolted for security. The guard must have been terrified indeed when he appeared, broke off the gates, and carried them, together with the side posts and the bar, on his shoulders to the top of a hill near Hebron. There he left them stranded, for all the Philistines to see; so they hated him more than ever.

## CHAPTER 7

### SAMSON IS BETRAYED

Now, though Samson ruled over Israel for some years, he had not broken the hated Philistine yoke.

As time went on, Samson again loved a Philistine woman one Delilah. The lords of the Philistines thought they saw a good chance of getting him into their power, for they knew that he loved Delilah so passionately that she might persuade him to do anything she asked him to do.

"Entice him," they said to Delilah, "and see wherein his great strength lies, so that we may bind him. If you succeed in this we will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver."

Delilah was only pretending to love Samson and in order to win the money and please the lords of the Philistines; so she said to him one evening:

"Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound?"

Samson ought to have been suspicious of such a question, but he answered lightly, "Bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, that have never been used, and I shall be weak as other men!"

So Delilah bound him, and he may have laughed merrily at

## SAMSON IS BETRAYED

her as she did it. For when the Philistines, whom she had hidden close by leaped out upon him he broke the bowstrings as though they were made of tow caught in the fire.

And Delilah said to Samson, "Behold thou hast mocked me, and told me lies; and now, tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound?"

"If they bind me fast with new ropes, then I shall be weak and be as another man!" he answered.

Delilah took new ropes and bound him, and said to him, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!"

But when the Philistines rushed in, Samson broke the ropes off his arms like a thread.

Then Delilah asked him once again, and he answered: "If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web, I shall be weak as another man."

So Delilah did so, and Samson went to sleep, but when Delilah cried, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" Samson rose and broke away, and freed himself.

Then Delilah cried, "How canst thou say 'I love thee,' when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth?"

And it came to pass when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; then he told her all his heart, and said unto her, "There hath not come a razor upon mine head, for I have been a Nazarite unto God all my life. If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up this once; for he hath shewed me all his heart."

Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her, and brought money in their hands. And she made Samson sleep with his head upon her knees, and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" she cried.

Samson rose up, thinking that he had but to shake himself to recover his strength. But to his horror he saw the locks of his

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hair lying on the ground. His vow was broken. He had been faithless to Jehovah, in revealing to this wicked woman his secret.

His strength had left him. It was no use to struggle with the Philistines. They made him a prisoner, carried him in triumph to prison, bored out his eyes, and forced him to grind corn amongst the slaves in the prison.

## CHAPTER 8

### JEHOVAH REMEMBERS SAMSON

THE blinding of prisoners was one of the savage customs of those days, as we can see on Assyrian pictures on the stones. Now, it is sad enough to be blind, when friends are all around, anxious to help, but to such a man as Samson to be blind in a dungeon was bitter indeed.

John Milton, our blind poet, once wrote a great poem on Samson, and the following lines are supposed to be spoken by him as he groans out in his anguish.

“O glorious strength,  
Put to the labour of a beast, debased  
Lower than bond slave. Promise was that I  
Should Israel from Philistinian yoke deliver;  
Ask for this great Deliverer now, and find him  
Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves.  
Himself in bonds under Philistinian yoke.

O loss of sight, of thee I most complain  
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains.

Life in captivity—  
Among inhuman foes!”

But the day came when Samson's hair began to grow again, and we have no doubt that he in his hours of darkness, prayed to Jehovah, his only helper, and asked Him to forgive his unfaithfulness.

One day the triumphant Philistines, in their wild joy at the

## JEHOVAH REMEMBERS SAMSON

capture of Samson, made a great feast to Dagon their god. The Philistines were sure that Dagon had given them the victory over Samson, and they gathered in their great temple for the Festival.

"Our god has delivered Samson into our hand!" they cried, and when the blind and fettered prisoner was brought in to make sport for them, they shouted in cruel triumph. Samson was placed in the centre, between two supporting pillars, and the place was crowded to the roof with men and women, and lords of the Philistines. Such a crowd could shout into the blind man's ears taunts which cut and tortured.

Then Samson spoke to the boy who was guiding him. "Let me feel the pillars upon which the house stands," he said, "so that I may lean upon them."

The boy placed Samson's hands on the pillars, and, as Samson felt them, he cried to Jehovah in his heart.

And Samson said, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."

Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!"

Then he bowed himself with all his might, and Jehovah remembered His servant, and gave him back his strength for the last time. The house fell, with all the people, and thus it came about that Samson killed more in his death than in his life.

The Philistines were so crushed by this terrible disaster that they made no objection to Samson's father and his people coming to take up the poor crushed body, that they might bear it away and bury it in the family grave.







## Part Eight

### CHAPTER I

#### THE STORY OF RUTH

**D**URING the days when the Judges ruled in Canaan, there was a famine round about Bethlehem, and Elimelech, of the tribe of Judah, left his land, and emigrated with his wife and his two sons to the East of Jordan, to the country of Moab. The Moabites were descended, as we shall remember, from Lot, and we have already met Balak, a king of Moab. They worshipped the god Chemosh.

Elimelech was a faithful worshipper of Jehovah, and he taught his sons about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Elimelech's wife was named Naomi, and they had two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. The sons married Moabitish women, the one named Orpah and the other Ruth. But trouble came, for first Elimelech died, and then his two sons, and Naomi was left with her two daughters-in-law, of whom she was very fond.

It was hard indeed to know what to do for the best, but as Naomi heard that the famine was now over in her country, and as her husband had owned some land in Bethlehem, she decided that she had better return to her own people. Orpah and Ruth were grieved indeed that their mother-in-law was leaving them, and when she set out they both went with her for some distance on the way.

They were still quite young women, and Naomi prayed that Jehovah would repay them for the kindness they had shown to her

## THE STORY OF RUTH

and to her sons, and that they would be made happy with other husbands.

Then she kissed them both tenderly, and both of them wept.

"No, no," they said, "certainly we will return with thee unto thy people."

But Naomi still urged them to remain in Moab, where they could remarry.

"It grieveth me much, for your sakes," she said, "that the hand of Jehovah is gone out against me!" For in those times people often put down quite natural troubles to the anger of God.

At last Orpah was persuaded to go back, and she kissed Naomi and said good-bye.

"Behold," said Naomi to Ruth, "thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law."

And Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; Jehovah do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Naomi's heart must have been warmed by these affectionate words, and when she saw that Ruth was quite determined to come with her, she left off trying to persuade her to go back.

The journey to Bethlehem only took them a day or two, but when they arrived neither of them guessed that Ruth was to become the great-grandmother of King David, and the ancestress of Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE RETURN TO BETHLEHEM

IN Bethlehem news had spread about Ruth's kindness to her mother-in-law, and how she had chosen to leave the worship of the god Chemosh and throw in her lot with the Israelites and Jehovah.

## THE RETURN TO BETHLEHEM

As soon as the two women approached the gate of Bethlehem, the people, and especially the women, crowded out in sympathetic friendliness, not only to welcome Naomi, but to see her Moabitish daughter-in-law.

"Is this indeed Naomi?" they asked, for she must have looked very different from the happy young wife they had last seen.

"Call me not 'Naomi,'" she said, for "Naomi" meant "Pleasant," "but call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

We shall remember that the Children of Israel, when first they came out of Egypt, called a place "Marah" because the waters were bitter.

"I went out full," went on Naomi, "and Jehovah hath brought me home empty; why call ye me Naomi, seeing that Jehovah had shown himself to be against me?"

So Naomi and Ruth found a little home together, but the question was, how were they to live? Now, a rich man named Boaz owned fields round about Bethlehem, and it is quite likely that he had heard the news of the return of Naomi, for he was a kinsman of Elimelech. As it was the beginning of the barley harvest, he was very busy with his servants getting in his crops. And as Ruth noticed that all round the countryside the harvest was being gathered, she said to Naomi, "Let me now go to the field and glean the ears of corn in the field of some man who will allow it."

And Naomi answered, "Go, my daughter."

It was the custom to allow the poor to glean the stalks of corn that the reapers left scattered; so Ruth went into a field, and gleaned after the reapers, and it happened that she went into the field which belonged to Boaz. Presently she noticed a friendly, well-dressed man of middle age enter the field. He looked round and greeted his reapers politely.

"Jehovah be with you!" he said.

"Jehovah bless thee!" they answered.

"Who is yonder maiden?" he asked his head man.

"She is the Moabitish maiden who has come back with Naomi out of the country of Moab," he answered. "She said, 'I pray you let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'"

## THE RETURN TO BETHLEHEM

Then Boaz went up to Ruth and spoke kindly.

"Go not to glean in another field," he said, "but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them; have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn."

Ruth was amazed at the kind words, for she had half expected that when the owner arrived she would be driven from the field.

So she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground, and said, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, seeing I am a stranger?"

Then Boaz explained that he had learnt all that she had done to help her mother-in-law.

"Jehovah recompense thy work!" he said, and a full reward be given thee of Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

"Thou hast comforted me, my lord," said Ruth, "for thou hast spoken to the heart of thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens."

But Boaz had more kindness to offer. "At meal time," he said, "come thou hither and eat of the bread and dip thy morsel in the vinegar."

So Ruth gleaned diligently, and at midday she sat down by the reapers, and Boaz made her welcome, and handed her so much parched corn that she could not eat it all, and had some over.

In harvest time men gathered some of the finest ears with a length of stalk, and after tying them in a bunch, put them over the fire, until most of the husk was burnt away.

The inside grain was thus ready roasted, and had a delicious taste, and they rubbed the ears in their hands, to get rid of all husk.

But when Ruth was again out of hearing, Boaz said to his reapers, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not shame her by making objection. And let fall handfuls on purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."

So Ruth gleaned until the sun-setting, and then she beat out the grain, and found that she had a very heavy weight of pure grain to take to Naomi.

"Where hast thou gleaned to-day?" asked Naomi, quite amazed.

Then Ruth told her the whole exciting story, and Naomi

## THE RETURN TO BETHLEHEM

instructed her to keep with the maidens of Boaz. So Ruth gleaned all through the barley harvest and the wheat harvest, and so provided a store of food for herself and Naomi.

Now, there was a custom amongst the Israelites that if a man died without leaving children, and had left property, the nearest relative had the right to buy the property and to marry the widow. Boaz now wished to marry Ruth; but there was one man who was a nearer relative, who had the first right to buy this Bethlehem property. So Boaz went to the gate of the city, just as Abraham did, when he wished to buy a grave for Sarah. He met the next of kin, who agreed before witnesses that he would stand aside, and let Boaz buy the family property and marry Ruth.

So all the people who were standing round and the elders said, "We are witnesses," and every one was glad that Ruth should be happy with Boaz, who loved her so dearly.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE BABY GRANDSON

NAOMI was growing happier. Ruth and Boaz were always kind to her, and she was spending her days in beautiful Bethlehem in peace. But a greater joy was to come. One day some women arrived to give Naomi great news. One of them was carrying a little baby in her arms, and laid the baby on Naomi's lap.

"Blessed be Jehovah," said the woman, "which hath not left thee this day without a grandson. He shall be a restorer of thy life, and will comfort thine old age, for he is the son of thy daughter-in-law Ruth, who has been better to thee than ten sons."

So Naomi took the baby, and kissed him, and she became his nurse. The child was named Obed, and he became afterwards the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.



## CHAPTER I

### SAMUEL, THE BOY PROPHET

**T**HE Israelites now living in Canaan and to the west of the Jordan were still groaning under the oppression of the Philistines, who had become a powerful nation on the southwestern coast of the Great Sea.

We shall follow more clearly, if we take another look at the map.

Though many of the Israelites had turned to the worship of false gods, there were others who longed to serve Jehovah faithfully, and who came regularly to the Sanctuary at Shiloh. The old Tent of Meeting, which was constructed on the Sinai Plain, had in part given place to some simple stone structure, which was called a temple or sanctuary. Within its chamber there were the Golden Ark, the altar of Incense, the golden candlesticks, and the table upon which the fresh bread was laid. The stone tables of the law had been placed within the Ark, and some of the manna had been kept, too, for a memorial. In front of this sanctuary there stood the altar upon which the sacrifices were offered by those who were faithful to Jehovah.

It could not have been very long after Samson's death that the priest Eli led the worship at Shiloh. Eli was a good man, and he wished to do right; but he allowed his sons who served under him

## SAMUEL, THE BOY PROPHET

as priests to do many wicked things. In offering a sacrifice, only a certain part of the animal was actually burnt, and the rest was used jointly by the priests and by the people for a time of feasting.

The priest had a right to a fair share of the offerings, whether the offering was meat, or of the "first fruits." But Eli's sons were greedy, and they had the exasperating custom of taking more than the priests' share; moreover, they behaved rudely, so that the people hated to bring their offerings to Shiloh, when they had to submit to such disgraceful behaviour.

Eli ought, of course, to have forbidden his sons to be priests, for the honour of Jehovah and the sanctuary; but he was weak, and he was growing old and was afraid of his sons; and though from time to time he reproved them, he allowed them to go on in their wicked ways.

Now, there was a man named Elkanah, who lived at Ramah, who worshipped Jehovah faithfully, and came to Shiloh every year to bring his offering. There were about six places called Ramah at that time, but probably Elkanah came from the Ramah which is about nine miles north of Jerusalem, so he had not a very long journey to take. Elkanah had two wives, and he brought them with him, and gave them portions to offer in sacrifice.

His wife Peninnah had children, but his wife Hannah had no children, so Peninnah boasted and was very unkind to Hannah and mocked her. When they came to Shiloh, Elkanah gave Hannah an extra portion to take to the sanctuary, because he loved her, and was sorry that she had no children. But on one occasion, Peninnah provoked Hannah so unkindly that she wept bitterly and refused to eat, and Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why weepest thou? And why eatest thou not? And why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?"

Then Hannah rose up and went away to the sanctuary, and she noticed that the old priest, Eli, was seated by the door-posts. Hannah's heart was full of misery, and she wept and prayed to Jehovah in silence.

"O Jehovah of hosts," she vowed, "if Thou wilt remember me and wilt not forget Thine handmaid, but wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto Jehovah all the days of his life."

## SAMUEL, THE BOY PROPHET

Eli began to notice this woman. Her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Surely she must be drunk?

"How long wilt thou be drunken?" he asked severely. "Put away thy wine from thee!"

But poor Hannah answered, "No, my lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink; but have poured out my soul before Jehovah."

Then Eli spoke more gently. "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him."

"Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight!" she answered meekly. Then Hannah went away, and ate food, and her face was no more sad.

So to Hannah's great joy, a baby boy was born to her, and she called his name Samuel.

Elkanah continued to go to Shiloh for the sacrifice, but Hannah stayed at home until the child was old enough to go with her. Hannah remembered that the boy was not really hers, for she had promised him to Jehovah, but we do not know how much she had told the child as to what was to happen to him.

The time came when Hannah herself went to Shiloh, and took Samuel with her. We are not told whether Elkanah went, but it is almost certain that he did, for she took a three-year old bullock, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, for a feast. The bullock was sacrificed, and then Hannah brought her son to Eli.

"Oh, my lord," she said, "as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto Jehovah. For this child I prayed, and Jehovah hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore, also, I have lent him to Jehovah; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to Jehovah."

So the great change was to come in the boy's life. He was to leave his father and mother, and be under the charge of the kind old priest with the sad face. We are not told whether Samuel ever went back to Ramah on visits, but as his home was only about fifteen miles away from Shiloh, he probably did. But we do know that his mother did not forget him, for when she came to worship she brought him a robe to wear over his white tunic, a larger size each year as the boy grew.

Elkanah and Hannah had five more children, three boys and







## SAMUEL, THE BOY PROPHET

two girls, and, as they grew older, they also would go to Shiloh and see their eldest brother who was lent to Jehovah.

Samuel soon learnt to be useful in the sanctuary, and now that Eli was growing old and blind it was splendid for him to have this eager, thoughtful boy to wait upon him. We may be sure that Eli taught Samuel much about the history of the Israelites, and of Jehovah, who had brought them forth from Egypt. Samuel slept in the sanctuary, where a light burned before the sacred Ark, and one night, while the light was still burning, he was roused from sleep by thinking that he heard some one call his name.

"Samuel!"

The boy leaped up

"Here am I!" he answered.

He rushed off to Eli, thinking the old man needed him.

"Here I am, for thou calledst me!" he said

"I called thee not!" said Eli. "Lie down again."

So Samuel went back to his mattress.

But again a voice called, "Samuel!"

Again the boy ran to Eli.

"Here I am; for thou didst call me!"

"I called thee not, my son; lie down again!"

Again the boy lay down, and again the voice called, and again Samuel ran to Eli.

Then Eli knew that Jehovah had called the child.

"Go," said Eli, "and lie down. And it shall be that if He call thee, thou shalt say, 'Speak, Jehovah, for Thy servant heareth.'"

So Samuel lay down again, and Jehovah stood near and said:

"Samuel! Samuel!"

And Samuel answered:

"Speak, Jehovah, for Thy servant heareth!"

Jehovah gave Samuel a sad message to deliver to Eli. It was a solemn warning against the wickedness of his sons, and his own sin in not having restrained them, and about the punishment that must come.

Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the temple of Jehovah; and Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, "Samuel, my son!" and he answered, "Here am I!"

## SAMUEL, THE BOY PROPHET

"What is the thing that Jehovah hath said unto thee?" asked Eli. "I pray thee, hide it not from me."

So Samuel told him every word and hid nothing from him. Eli knew only too well how he had failed, and how his sons had failed, and he answered Samuel, "It is Jehovah. Let Him do what seemeth Him good."

So Samuel grew up to manhood at Shiloh, learning to listen for Jehovah's voice. Jehovah was with him, and the Israelites, from north to south, began to understand that Samuel was to be a prophet of Jehovah.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE LAST WICKEDNESS OF ELI'S SONS

IN this story, Samuel is not mentioned, and we do not know how old he was. But Eli was now ninety-eight and was quite blind. Bad news was spreading, for the Philistines were out on the warpath, and had won a great victory. Four thousand men were slaughtered, and when the remainder assembled in the camp the elders suggested that they should bring the Ark that was at Shiloh, so that it might save them from their enemies. They refused to admit that it was their own wicked ways which prevented Jehovah from standing by them.

So they sent off to Shiloh. The blind priest heard the tumult of excited voices, and asked what it could mean? His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, hastily explained that there had been a great defeat, and that the elders had sent for the Ark of the Covenant to be taken into battle, to give them the victory.

We can imagine Eli's horror; but he had never had any power over his wicked sons, so they won their way, and the aged priest could hear the clamouring and shouting, and see, as though he had sight of it, the golden Ark, crowned by the golden angels, being carried off down the valley from the heights of Shiloh to the battlefield. As the sounds died away, Eli must have thought that Jehovah himself had deserted his sanctuary. The Ark had gone!

## THE LAST WICKEDNESS OF ELI'S SONS

But in the camp of the Israelites there was tremendous jubilation. And when the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah came into the camp all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?" and they understood that the Ark of Jehovah was come into the camp.

The Philistines were afraid; for they said, "God is come into the camp! Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore! Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? These are the Gods which smote the Egyptians! Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men and fight."

And the Philistines fought; and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent, and there was a very great slaughter. The Ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with earth upon his head.

Eli had left the sanctuary—for what was the sanctuary when the Ark of God was no longer there?

He was seated near the gate, and he soon heard heart-rending cries which told that some dreadful misfortune had happened. The messenger panted up to the blind man, and cried, "I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army!"

"And what has come to pass, my son?" asked Eli, for his heart trembled for the Ark of God.

Then the messenger answered, "Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been a great slaughter among the people; and thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of God is taken."

And it came to pass that when he made mention of the Ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward, by the side of the gate; and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man and heavy.

# THE ARK AMONGST THE PHILISTINES

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ARK AMONGST THE PHILISTINES

It was a great victory for the Philistines to have secured the Ark of Israel's God, and they brought it in triumph to Ashdod, and placed it in the temple of their god Dagon.

There is little known about Dagon. Milton describes him:

"Dagon his name, sea-monster, upward man  
And downward fish!"

But it is thought now that Dagon was a god of agriculture, from the Hebrew "dagan," which meant corn.

However, on the following morning, when the Philistines entered the temple they found that Dagon had fallen on his face before the Ark of Jehovah.

So Dagon's priests, amazed and troubled, set up their god once more. But next morning, worse had happened. Dagon had fallen on his face before the Ark, and the head of Dagon and his hands were lying on the threshold, and only the trunk of Dagon remained.

In Ashdod an illness of tumours or boils broke out amongst the people, so they decided that the Ark of the God of Israel must be sent away. But wherever the Ark was sent in Philistia, illness broke out, and after it had been in the cities for seven months, the Philistines called for their priests and magicians, and said, "What shall we do to the Ark of Jehovah? How shall we send it back?"

And they said, "If ye send away the Ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but return a trespass offering, that ye shall be healed."

So, at command of the magicians, the Philistines made golden images of the tumours and of mice that had been ravaging the country, and placed them in a box. Then they made a new cart, and took two cows which had never worn a yoke. The cows were to be tied to the cart, and the calves were to be left at home. "Take the Ark of Jehovah," they said, "and lay it upon the cart; and put the

## THE ARK AMONGST THE PHILISTINES

jewels of gold, which ye return Him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away that it may go. And see if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, and if not, then we shall know that it is not Jehovah's hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us."

So the men of Ekron took two cows, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. And they laid the Ark of God on the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their tumours. And the cows, turning south and eastwards, took the straight way to Beth-shemesh and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh.

And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley, and they lifted up their eyes and saw the Ark, and rejoiced to see it. The cows brought the cart into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood still beside a great stone. So the Israelites cut up the wood of the cart, and killed the cows and offered them as a burnt offering to Jehovah. And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day.

Now, some men of the family of Jeconiah refused to rejoice at the return of the Ark, for some reason which we do not know. So Jehovah smote a number of them, and the men of Beth-shemesh were therefore alarmed to keep the Ark with them, and they sent messengers to the men of Kirjath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought again the Ark of Jehovah; come ye down and fetch it up to you."

Kirjath-jearim was situated on the high land to the north-east of Beth-shemesh, and the men came and fetched up the Ark of Jehovah, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and sanctified Eleazar, his son, to take care of it. So Shiloh was no longer a sanctuary.

As for Samuel, he judged Israel, and went on circuit from town to town, settling disputes and teaching the people about Jehovah and His laws, and managing the public affairs. Samuel made his home in Ramah, where he had been born, and there he set up an Altar to Jehovah.

## SAMUEL PLEADS FOR ISRAEL

### CHAPTER 4

#### SAMUEL PLEADS FOR ISRAEL

OUR path through the Bible is not always very clear, for some pieces of the old stories have been lost, and some may have been put in the wrong places by those who have preserved them so carefully for us. We are now coming to the great stories of Saul and David, and though they do not always quite follow on to one another, and may be rather puzzling at times, they are amongst the most moving and vivid stories we shall find.

Let us imagine the state of the country, when the Ark was no longer at Shiloh, and Samuel was the Judge. There came a time when the people, still oppressed by the Philistines, and still divided between their worship of Jehovah and of Baal and the Asherah, began to repent. Samuel heard of this repentance, and his heart went out to the people, as the heart of Moses used to go out to them; and he called them together and said, "If ye do return unto Jehovah with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto Jehovah, and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

Then the Children of Israel did put away Baal and Ashtaroth, and served Jehovah only. And Samuel was pleased, and he told the elders to gather the people together to Mizpeh, that he might pray to Jehovah on their behalf. So they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water and poured it out before Jehovah, and they fasted on that day and said, "We have sinned against Jehovah."

When the Philistines heard that they were gathered together to Mizpeh, they decided that it was a great chance to overwhelm them, and the Children of Israel, hearing of the coming attack, were afraid. But Samuel was not afraid; and he took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering, and cried to Jehovah—and Jehovah heard him.

Even as the sacrifice was being offered, the Philistines drew near to battle; but Jehovah thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and the Israelites, full of courage once more, gained a great victory.



## SAMUEL GREW OLD

### CHAPTER 5

#### SAMUEL GREW OLD

Now, when Samuel grew older, he made the great mistake of setting up his sons as judges, even though he knew them to be dishonest, and knew that they gave false judgments in favour of those who brought the most money. We shall recall how Jethro advised his son-in-law, Moses, to choose out as leaders men who feared God, who were men of truth, and men who hated greediness. It was no wonder, therefore, that the Elders of Israel gathered together to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways, now make us a king to judge us like all the other nations."

So Samuel prayed to Jehovah, and laid before Him this request of the people. Samuel was probably very much surprised when Jehovah made answer, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken Me and served other gods; so do they also unto thee. Now, therefore, hearken unto their voice: howbeit, protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them."

So Samuel warned the people what it would mean to have a king. A king would take their strongest sons from home, and appoint them to drive his chariots or run before them. He would make them captains in his army, order them to sow and reap for him and make his war-weapons. He would take their daughters to be cooks and bakers, and choose out the best of their fields to give them to his favourites. He would claim a tenth part of their seed, their grapes and other fruit, their sheep and their servants, their cattle and their asses. When they found all these things happen, it would be too late to call upon Jehovah.

But the Elders were not in the least convinced by such clear words of warning.

## SAMUEL GREW OLD

"Nay," they clamoured, "but we will have a king to reign over us, so that we may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles."

Then Samuel again prayed to Jehovah, and told him all that the people had said.

"Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king," said Jehovah.

As we travel on through the coming years we shall be able to judge for ourselves whether the people were wise in wanting a king, or whether they would have been happier and better if they had been content to have a Leader or Prophet to rule over them, who would have taught them Jehovah's will, as Moses had tried to do.

## CHAPTER 6

### SAUL THE SON OF KISH

WE shall now break off from the Israelites and their demand for a king, and follow the story of Saul, the son of Kish. Saul was a Benjamite, handsome and well-built, and from his shoulders upwards he stood higher than any of the people. He was not quite a young man, for he was married and had a son named Jonathan.

Now, the asses of Saul's father had gone astray, and Kish said to him, "Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses."

This was a difficult task, for the country was hilly and rocky, and so split and torn with wadies and valleys that it would be quite easy to miss a couple of asses or even a troop of them. They searched through Mount Ephraim, and south-eastwards in the land of the Benjamites, but they could not track them.

On reaching the land of Zuph, Saul said, "Come and let us return, lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us."

But the servant suggested that they should visit a Seer in a city near by, a man of God, who would tell them which way to go.

## SAUL THE SON OF KISH

Saul objected, because they had no present to bring, for they had even used up all their bread; but the servant insisted that he had the fourth part of a shekel of silver which he could give.

So Saul agreed, and as they went up the hill to the city they found young maidens going out to draw water, and they said unto them, "Is the seer here?"

They answered, "He is; behold he is before you. Make haste now, for he came to-day to the city; for there is a feast of the people in the high place. The people will not eat until he comes, because he doth bless the sacrifice. Now, therefore, get you up, for to-day ye shall find him."

So Saul and his servant followed the advice of the eager maidens, and, as they went forward, the seer, who was none other than Samuel, came out, on his way to the high place.

Now, Jehovah had told Samuel in his ear on the previous day, "To-morrow, about this time, I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin; and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over My people Israel, that he may save My people out of the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry is come unto Me."

And when Samuel saw Saul, Jehovah said unto him, "Behold the man whom I spake to thee of!"

Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is."

And Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer. Go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to-day, and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. As for thine asses that were lost three days ago, they are found, so trouble not about them. On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on thy father's house?"

Saul was puzzled, as he tried to understand Samuel's words.

"Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family, the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore speakest thou so to me?"

But Samuel took Saul and his servant to the feast, and made them sit in the chief place amongst the thirty guests. Saul was given the choicest portion to eat, and later, when they had returned to the city, Samuel talked seriously with him.

## SAUL THE SON OF KISH

Early next morning Samuel called Saul, and, as they were going down the hill, said, "Bid thy servant to pass on before us."

So the servant passed on.

"Now, stand still," said Samuel, "that I may show thee the work of God." Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head and kissed him, and said, "Is it not because Jehovah hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance?"

## CHAPTER 7

### THE KING CHOSEN

**SAMUEL** had commanded the people to assemble at Mizpah, in order that they might choose a king, and there was great excitement.

In spite of Samuel's warning, they were sure that if they only had a king to lead them, all their troubles would be over.

We shall find, alas, that jealousy amongst the tribes soon appeared!

In those days great dependence was placed on drawing lots, and as Samuel directed that a lot should be drawn, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. Then each family in Benjamin was taken, and at last the lot fell upon Saul.

Saul, however, could not be found, for he had hidden himself. But he was soon discovered, and they brought him out; and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

And Samuel said to all the people, "See ye him whom Jehovah hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people!"

Then all the people shouted and said, "God save the king!" or "Let the king live!" This is a cry which can be read even to-day on Egyptian monuments.

Samuel welcomed the new king, and made a generous speech in this hour of personal defeat.

"Behold," he said, "I have listened to all you have had to say to me, and I have made a king over you!"

Then he reminded them that they had known him from a little

## THE KING CHOSEN

child, and challenged them to tell him whether he had ever cheated them, or taken a bribe. The people were generous in return, and with a hot impulsiveness they shouted, "Thou hast neither cheated us, nor oppressed us, nor taken a bribe from any man's hand."

"Then," cried Samuel, "Jehovah is witness, and your king is witness!"

"Jehovah is witness!" they answered.

"And now behold the king whom ye have chosen," said Samuel, "and whom ye have desired! Behold Jehovah hath set a king over you. If ye will fear Jehovah and serve Him, and not rebel against the commandment of Jehovah, then shall both ye, and also the king that reigneth over you, continue following Jehovah your God."

A great thunderstorm followed, injuring the wheat harvest, and the people feared greatly, because they had asked for a king.

But Samuel said, "Fear not; ye have done all this wickedness, yet turn not aside from following Jehovah. For Jehovah will not forsake His people for His great name's sake. God forbid that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

Saul became king, but Samuel was still the prophet, and went on doing all he could for the new kingdom. Most of the people were delighted to have Saul as king, but a few were rude to him, and said, "How shall this man save us?" and they brought him no present. But Saul showed himself wise, and made no complaint.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE VICTORY AGAINST THE AMMONITES

It appears that at first Saul lived on quietly at Gibeah, but, as time passed, some terrible news arrived from the east of the Jordan. Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had encamped near Jabesh-Gilead, and was demanding that as condition of a treaty, he should thrust out all the right eyes of the men. The elders asked for a respite for seven days, so that they might send messengers far and

## THE VICTORY AGAINST THE AMMONITES

wide, and they promised that if they could find no man to save them, they would come out to the king.

Now, when the messengers arrived at Gibeah, and the people heard the tidings, they lifted up their voices and wept. And behold, Saul came after the herd, out of the field, and Saul said, "What aileth the people that they weep?"

And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard these tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen."

And the fear of Jehovah fell on the people, and they came out as one man.

And they said unto the messengers that came, "Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-Gilead, 'To-morrow, by the time the sun be hot, ye shall have deliverance!'"

So the messengers returned to Jabesh-Gilead, and told the message, and they were glad.

Therefore they said to the king of Ammon, "To-morrow we will come out to you, and you shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you."

And it was so, on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host of the Ammonites in the morning watch, and they slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day; and it came to pass that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

## CHAPTER 9

### JONATHAN, SAUL'S SON

KING SAUL had a difficult task to face, for even after he had been reigning for some time, the Philistines still held on to their garrisons up on the high lands, and kept up a state of constant

## JONATHAN, SAUL'S SON

terror. The people often had to hide themselves in caves and in holes in the rocks, as they had done during the days of Gideon. To-day, if we travelled in Palestine, we should find numbers of these caves and underground dwelling amongst the hills, some of which are being explored.

At the beginning of his reign Saul was a man of power and did great deeds, and, had his whole heart been set upon serving Jehovah, he might have brought back the people from their idol-worship to obey God. He drew out the affection of those about him, and his chief captain, Abner, a cousin, was devoted to him. So was his son Jonathan, and, even when he did wrong things, Samuel grieved for him.

During one of Saul's campaigns he was encamped by a threshing-floor, and the royal tent was set up by a pomegranate tree. The Philistines were encamped across a valley called Michmash, which was a few miles north of Ramah and ran eastward, towards the Jordan. For some time no attempt had been made to dislodge the Philistines from the rocky heights, and Jonathan became impatient at the inactivity.

Without saying anything to his father, he proposed to his young armour-bearer, or personal servant, that they should descend the steep sides of the gorge, and make an attempt on the Philistine garrison on the rocks above.

It seemed an impossible scheme, for the crag upon which the enemy had encamped seemed well nigh unscalable. But Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, "Come, and let us go over to this garrison; it may be that Jehovah will work for us, for there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few."

And his armour-bearer answered, "Do all that is in thine heart. Behold I am with thee."

Then Jonathan suggested that they should ask for a sign from Jehovah, as to how they were to act.

"We will discover ourselves to the garrison, and if they say to us, 'Tarry until we come to you!' then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. But if they say, 'Come up unto us!' then we will go up; for Jehovah hath delivered them into our hands."

So they went forward boldly, until they came within sight of

## JONATHAN, SAUL'S SON

the Philistines, and very soon they heard taunts and shouts, "Behold the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves. Come up to us, and we will show you a thing!"

Then Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, "Come up after me, for Jehovah hath delivered them into the hand of Israel."

Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, and his armour-bearer after him. On reaching the summit, they attacked the garrison. Jonathan struck them down, and it was his armour-bearer's duty to give the death-blow. They killed about twenty men, and the main Philistine army, seeing what was happening, was seized with terror; then, when an earthquake shook the rock and the valley, the whole camp trembled with fright.

The look-out men belonging to Saul, standing on the Gibeah side of the valley, now began to notice that something extraordinary was happening amongst the Philistines; for the camp seemed to be melting away, and they rushed down to report to King Saul.

"Number!" cried Saul; "and let us find out who is gone from us!"

So they numbered, and discovered that Jonathan and his armour-bearer had gone. Within a very short time the Israelites were rushing to the battle, refusing even to wait for the blessing of the priest, Ahiah, who was with them.

There was confusion enough amongst the Philistines, for by now they were fighting one another. Some Israelites, who had been cowardly enough to desert to the Philistines, turned to support Saul and Jonathan, and, as the Philistines fled, many who had been hiding in the caves and rock-holes ventured out to join in the chase.

Saul, in his excitement, issued a very foolish order. "Cursed," said he, "be the man who tasteth any food until the evening, so that I may be avenged on mine enemies."

So all the long hot day the people fought, and they grew mad with hunger, owing to the king's folly. Even when they entered a forest, with honey dripping around them, they dared not touch it because of the king's curse. But Jonathan, not having heard his father's command, took honey from the end of his staff, and felt refreshed and strengthened.



## JONATHAN, SAUL'S SON

The others watched in alarm, and one remonstrated with the prince: "Thy father hath said, 'Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day.'"

Jonathan was exasperated at this sign of his father's absurdity, and he answered swiftly, "My father hath troubled the land. If the people had eaten to-day of the spoil of their enemies, there had now been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines."

As night drew on, the people were so famished that they began to slaughter cattle, and devour them, without leaving time for the blood to run away. This way of eating flesh was against the law of Moses, and when Saul heard what they were doing he commanded a stone to be set up, to which the people could bring their animals and have them killed according to the regulations. Saul also built an altar for a thanksgiving offering.

But now Saul wished to know from Jehovah whether he was to go on chasing the Philistines all night. He asked Ahiah, the priest, to get directions from Jehovah. But Jehovah gave no answer to Ahiah, and Saul's excitement grew upon him. He was quite sure that some one must have committed a sin.

In those times a vow or a curse was held to be a very serious matter, and Saul exclaimed, "As Jehovah liveth, though it be Jonathan my son, he shall surely die!"

So he set the army on one side, and himself and Jonathan on the other, and they drew lots, and he and Jonathan were taken. Then he drew lots between himself and Jonathan, and Jonathan was taken.

"Tell me," he cried to Jonathan, "what hast thou done?"

"I did but taste a little honey on the end of my staff," said Jonathan, "and now I must die!"

"Thou shalt surely die!" said the king.

"Jonathan is to die!" The news passed like wild-fire through the camp. Was Jonathan, the man who had brought about this victory, to die?

So they clamoured against the king's decision.

"God forbid!" they shouted, "as Jehovah liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground. For he hath wrought with God this day." So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

## SAMUEL AND DAVID

### CHAPTER 10

#### SAMUEL AND DAVID

SAUL, the chosen king, no longer pleased Jehovah, and it came about that God told Samuel that He had rejected Saul from being the head of the royal house. Yet Samuel loved Saul, and, when he heard that he was finally rejected, he wept all night.

But there came a day when Jehovah said to Samuel, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing that I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, and I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite; for I have provided Me a king from among his sons."

We shall remember how Ruth the Moabitess married Boaz, and how her baby was named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse, who was a sheep-farmer on the very land which had once belonged to Boaz. He had eight sons, and the youngest was named David?

David, being the youngest, had to look after the sheep, and as he watched them during hot days and cold nights he had the same hard task as Moses, Jacob, and other early Hebrews. Now, it happened that on a certain day the elders of Bethlehem were startled by the arrival of Samuel.

"Dost thou come peaceably?" they asked anxiously.

"Peaceably," he answered. "I am come to sacrifice unto Jehovah."

Jesse knew that this meant a feast, so they made ready, and Samuel sanctified them, and called Jesse and his sons near to him.

Samuel was wondering which of the sons Jehovah had chosen, and when he looked at the eldest son Eliab, he thought, "Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him."

But Jehovah said to Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature; because I have refused him. For Jehovah seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart."

Then, one by one, the sons passed before Samuel, but Jehovah had not chosen any of them.

"Are here all thy sons?" asked Samuel.

## SAMUEL AND DAVID

"There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold he keepeth the sheep," said Jesse.

"Send and fetch him," ordered Samuel, "for we will not sit down till he be come hither."

So Jesse sent for David, and presented him to the prophet.

The young man was ruddy and of a beautiful countenance.

And Jehovah said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren, and the Spirit of Jehovah entered into David.

Whether David or any one present quite understood what Samuel intended by his action, we do not know. But David knew that he had been chosen out by Jehovah for some great purpose. In the history that follows, however, we never find David pushing himself forward, nor failing in loyalty to Saul, whom he grew to love.

## CHAPTER II

### SAUL AND DAVID MEET

SAUL had, as we have seen, an excitable nature, and when he heard the bitter truth from Samuel that Jehovah had set him aside from founding the royal house, he became depressed, and began to show signs of madness. His servants thought an evil spirit had come upon him, and they were much troubled.

"Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee," they said. "Let our lord now command thy servants which are before thee, to seek out a man who is a cunning player on an harp; and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well."

And Saul answered, "Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me."

Then one of the servants answered: "Behold I have seen a son of Jesse, the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing—a comely person, and Jehovah is with him."

So Saul sent messengers to command Jesse to send David to him.

## SAUL AND DAVID MEET

Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a skin of wine and a kid, and sent them with David to Saul.

We cannot tell how much hope Saul had that the shepherd boy with the lyre would do him any good, but when David entered and bowed before him, Saul loved him greatly. As for David, his heart went out in warmest loyalty and love for the suffering king.

But the test was to come. The king sat back, and David took his lyre, and played wonderful music which meant exquisite and magical things like the morning sunrise, the coming of spring, the song of the birds, the whisperings of the wind.

Saul's servants must have watched with great anxiety to see the effect of the music on their master. They noticed that the king's misery died down, and the black clouds that had gathered about his brain drifted away. It was as though the sky became all sunshine and peace.

Saul rose up refreshed and gladdened. In his gratitude to David he established him as his armour-bearer or personal servant, and when from time to time the fits of illness sank down upon him, David was ready with his music to lift the clouds once more.

As for Jonathan, he also loved David, and must have been thankful that he was making his father happier.

## CHAPTER 12

### THE PHILISTINE GIANT

SAUL was still struggling in what seemed to be a losing campaign against the Philistines. About twelve miles down the hill from Bethlehem there lies the valley of Elah. The Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and the Israelites stood on a mountain on the other side.

It was sometimes the custom to decide a great conflict by means of a single combat between two champions, and the Philistines decided to send out a champion, to challenge the Hebrews. Goliath may or may not have been his name, and in the story he is usually

## THE PHILISTINE GIANT

called "the Philistine." He was over ten foot high, and was heavily armed from head to foot, and carried a mighty spear of great weight.

Each morning and evening the Philistine sallied forth, with his armour-bearer walking in front of him with a shield, and roared out his challenge to the Israelites.

"Why are ye come out to set your battle in array?" he cried. "Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me and to kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall ye be our servants and serve us. I defy the armies of Israel this day: give me a man, that we may fight together!"

When Saul and all Israel heard these words they were greatly afraid. Even Saul, who stood head and shoulders higher than any of the people, dared not accept the Philistine's challenge. But what of Saul's young armour-bearer, who cheered him with music? Saul was astonished indeed when David said quietly, "Let no man's heart fail him because of this Philistine. Thy servant will go and fight with him!"

Saul replied in astonishment: "Thou art not able to fight this Philistine; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

David was so convinced that Jehovah wished him to fight the Philistine that he tried to think of some argument by which he might persuade the king to allow him to go. David, of course, was taking upon himself a great responsibility; for if he failed, it would not only be that he would lose his life; Israel would fall still deeper under the Philistines' power.

"Thy servant kept his father's flocks," said David simply, "and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth, and when he arose against me I caught him by the beard, and smote him and slew him. Thy servant has slain both lions and bears, and this Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. Jehovah hath delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear; he will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine."

## THE PHILISTINE GIANT

David spoke so eagerly and with such quiet conviction and power that Saul was convinced.

"Go, and Jehovah be with thee!" he said.

Then Saul armed David with his armour, and put an helmet of brass upon his head. But when David had girded on the sword, he staggered under the weight of it all.

"I cannot go with these, my lord," he said, "for I have not proved them."

So he laid down the armour and the royal sword, and went out to face the Philistine as an ordinary shepherd, as fearlessly as he had faced the lions and bears.

A shepherd is always expert with a sling, for he has to kill wolves and other enemies of his flock, so, having walked down the hill into the valley where the Philistine walked, David chose five smooth stones from the stream and put them in his pouch.

Then, before the watching armies, David answered the challenge, holding his sling in his hand, and carrying a staff. And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he scorned him, for he was but a youth and ruddy and of fair countenance.

"Am I a dog that thou comest to me with a staff?" he shouted, and he cursed David by his gods "Come to me and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field."

"Thou comest to me," shouted David back, "with a sword and with a spear and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel Whom thou hast defied. This day will Jehovah deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee and take thine head from thee, and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this company shall know that Jehovah saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is Jehovah's, and He will give you into our hands."

And it came to pass that when the Philistine arose and came and drew nigh to meet David, David put his hand in his pouch and took thence a stone, and slung it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sank in his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth. Then David ran and stood upon the Philis-

## THE PHILISTINE GIANT

tine, and took his sword and drew it out of his sheath and slew him and cut off his head therewith.

And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

And the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines to the gates of Ekron, and, later, they returned and carried off the spoil from their tents.

## CHAPTER 13

### SAUL'S GROWING JEALOUSY OF DAVID

WHETHER Saul knew that David had been appointed by Jehovah as his successor, or whether he just guessed, is not clear, but his fits of jealousy grew upon him.

His was a strange and perverse character, for there was a side of Saul that loved David, and there was a side of him that longed to kill him. Indeed, as time went on, he openly expressed his hope that David might be killed in some expedition against the Philistines. It angered him also intensely to know of the close friendship which there was between Jonathan and David.

Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David, and Saul gave her to David as his wife, hoping that Michal might bring trouble upon him. And one day Saul spoke out quite clearly to Jonathan and his servants, and told them to kill David.

So Jonathan told David, saying, "Saul, my father, seeketh to kill thee."

Jonathan warned David to stay in the open that night, in some secret place. He was, however, to notice when Jonathan and his father came out in the morning and talked together.

Next morning Jonathan came out with his father and he spoke well of David: "Let not the king sin against his servant David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and he has always sought to work for the king's good. He did put his life in his hands when he slew the Philistine, and Jehovah wrought a great salvation for all Israel. Thou sawest it, and didst rejoice. Wherefore wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?"

## SAUL'S GROWING JEALOUSY OF DAVID

Saul was so moved with Jonathan's pleading that he **swore to him** and said, "As Jehovah liveth, David shall not be slain."

Then Jonathan, delighted with his success, called to David, who came out of his hiding place and, bowing low to Saul, was received back into favour.

But Saul's mood only lasted a short time. As David, now an officer in Saul's army, gained more victories over the Philistines, Saul's jealousy revived. One day David was playing sweet music on his lyre, hoping to ease the king's depression, when Saul furtively aimed a javelin at him. David evaded the missile, and escaped that night to his own house. Here he was watched by Saul's men, for the king intended to slay him in the morning. But Michal now came to her husband's rescue, and let him down from a window. When David had escaped she placed an image in the bed with its head on a bolster, and covered it with a cloth, so that Saul's men might be deceived.

And Saul was angry with Michal and said, "Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy that he is escaped?"

Then Michal made an excuse to her angry father that David had threatened to kill her unless she helped him to escape.

## CHAPTER 14

### THY ARROWS

DAVID returned to the court, but he was still fully convinced that Saul meant evil against him. Yet he yearned for peace.

"What have I done, what is my sin before thy father, that he **seeketh my life?**" he asked Jonathan one day.

"**God forbid!**" said Jonathan. "Thou shalt not die. Behold **my father will do nothing either great or small until he has disclosed it to me.**"

But David answered sorrowfully, "Thy father certainly **knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight; and he saith, 'Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved;'** but truly, as Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death."



## THE ARROWS

Then David proposed a plan. "To-morrow is the new moon, and I ought to be at the feast, but give me leave to hide myself in the field until the third day at even. If your father misses me, then say that David earnestly asked leave to attend a sacrifice at Bethlehem. If the king says 'It is well!' then shall I know that it is peace between us, but if he be very angry, then shall I know that he has determined upon evil against me. Indeed," David continued, "if there be evil in me, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?"

So they made a vow together of deep friendship, and David promised that in days to come he would befriend Jonathan's family.

It was agreed that David should hide in the field, and that Jonathan, as soon as he had discovered his father's intentions, should come out with a lad for practice with his bow and arrows. If he called to the lad who ran to fetch back the arrows he had shot, "Behold the arrows are on this side of thee!" then David would understand that the king was friendly. If he called "The arrows are beyond thee!" then David would be sure that there was danger.

So David hid himself, and Jonathan attended the feast. Saul was in the place of honour, with his chief captain, Abner, who was also his cousin, seated by his side. Jonathan was there too, but David's place was empty.

On the first day the king made no remark; but on the second day he said, "Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday nor to-day?"

"David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem to a family sacrifice," answered Jonathan.

We shall notice as we go along that in those days it was not considered wrong to tell lies for a good purpose, but we shall also find that some lies seemed only to make matters worse.

Then Saul's wrath was kindled against Jonathan, and he cried, "Dost thou not see that as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established nor thy kingdom? Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die."

Clearly Saul was right in realising that if David came to the throne, Jonathan would be cast out. Indeed it was a common custom in those days to slaughter all the family of the late king, when a king of a new family came to the throne.

## THE ARROWS

But Jonathan answered, "Wherefore shall David be slain? What hath he done?"

And Saul cast a javelin at Jonathan, to smite him; whereby Jonathan knew that his father was determined to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger; for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

And it came to pass in the morning that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed, and a little lad with him. When he had shot three arrows the lad ran off to bring them back, and Jonathan shouted, "Are not the arrows beyond thee? Make speed, haste, stay not." So the lad gathered up the arrows and returned to his master. But the lad did not guess anything, and was sent home.

And as soon as the lad was gone David appeared and fell on his face to the ground, out of respect to the king's son. But Jonathan lifted him up, and they kissed one another and wept one with the other, and David wept the more bitterly.

"Go in peace," said Jonathan at last. "We have sworn both of us in the name of Jehovah, saying: 'Jehovah be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever.'"

So the friends separated.

Jonathan returned to the court, but David was an outlaw, and fled away for his life.





## Part Ten

### CHAPTER I

#### DAVID DECEIVES AHIMELECH

**D**AVID was now an outlaw, liable at any moment to be captured and slain, and any one who befriended him might put himself into danger.

Having fled from the court, he arrived at Nob. Nob was one of the cities set aside for the priests who were Levites—that is, descendants of Jacob's son, Levi. Not all Levites were priests, and we shall recall that Moses and Aaron were of the tribe of Levi. When the Israelites settled in Canaan the Levites had no special

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district allotted to them, but certain cities were given to them in different parts of the country.

Now it was clear that David was well known, and it was likely that Ahimelech, the priest of Nob, knew of the quarrel between Saul and David.

David left a few faithful followers in the background, and when he arrived Ahimelech was filled with fear. He did not wish to help any rebel against the king.

"Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?" asked Ahimelech.

"The king hath commanded me to do a certain business," lied David, "and hath said unto me, 'Let not any man know of the business about which I have sent thee.' Now, therefore, what hast thou ready to give me in the way of food?"

"There is no common bread," said Ahimelech, "but only the hallowed bread that is placed before Jehovah."

But David persuaded Ahimelech to give him the bread, and then he asked whether Ahimelech could supply him with a sword.

"I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me," lied David again, "because the king's business required haste."

And the priest said, "I have the sword of Goliath the Philistine whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah. Behold it is here, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod," (or sacred image). "If thou wilt take that, take it; for there is no other save that here."

"There is none like that!" said David. "Give it me!"

So David took the sword and the bread, and hurried off to his waiting companions. Perhaps he thought that he had managed his business very well, but he little knew what was to follow. Even as he was talking to Ahimelech, one of Saul's chief servants was listening and watching in secret. His name was Doeg. He was not an Israelite but an Edomite.

David and his men went south-west, into the wild country, and set up a camp round the cave of Adullam. Adullam was indeed a stronghold, and lay some twelve miles south-west of Bethlehem, in the country of Judah. And when Jesse heard of his son's flight, he and his wife and David's brothers fled to him, for their lives were not safe from Saul's wrath. Indeed, every one who was in distress, in debt, or discontented, fled to David, and he became their chief with a band of four hundred men.

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But David was anxious about the safety of his parents; so he took them away to the land of Moab, from where his great-grandmother, Ruth, had come. The king of Moab received him kindly, and promised to take care of his father and mother as long as they needed it. So David, more satisfied, returned to his company.

But Saul, when he heard the news that David was defying him in the mountains, was full of anger, and he cried to his servants as they stood round him:

"Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse (of the tribe of Judah) give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds; that all of you have conspired against me, and none of you tell me that my son has made a league with the son of Jesse, and none of you are sorry for me?"

Then Doeg the Edomite came forward, and said quietly, "I saw the son of Jesse come to Nob, to Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub, and he gave him victuals and the sword of Goliath."

Now Nob was only a few miles away from Gibeah, so Saul sent in hot haste for Ahimelech, his household and the priests, and they all arrived in great fear to answer the king's command.

"Hear now, thou son of Ahitub!" cried Saul passionately.

"Here I am, my lord!" said Ahimelech.

"Why have ye conspired against me," cried the king, "thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?"

Then Ahimelech insisted that he had no idea that David was an outlaw.

"Who is so faithful among all thy servants," he pleaded, "as David, which is the king's son-in-law? Thy servant knew nothing of all this!"

But Saul would not listen to any excuse. "Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech," he cried, "thou and all thy father's house!" Then he gave orders for the massacre.

Saul's servants were afraid to lay hands upon the priests of Jehovah. But Doeg the Edomite was ready enough, and he did the dreadful slaughter. Only one of Ahimelech's sons escaped, and he fled to David. His name was Abiathar. When David heard the story

## DAVID DECEIVES AHIMELECH

he was profoundly moved and distressed; and as we know more of David, we shall find that he was always sorry after he had done wrong things. He now remembered his deception of Ahimelech, and how he had led him into aiding an outlaw, and he said to Abiathar, "I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have been the cause of the death of all the persons in thy father's house. Abide with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; and with me thou shalt be in safeguard."

## CHAPTER 2

### DAVID ATTACKS THE PHILISTINES

ONE day word came to David and his men that the Philistines were fighting against the frontier town of Keilah, and robbing the threshing floors of the grain.

And David asked Jehovah whether he should go to fight for Keilah.

"Go and smite the Philistines and save Keilah," said Jehovah.

David's men were very anxious, for they felt sure that if they left the stronghold they would be in danger of Saul. But David went forth, and defeated the Philistines, saved Keilah, and took much cattle. Saul, hearing the news, saw his chance to capture David, who was now in a town with walls and barred gates; and he decided to besiege Keilah and force the inhabitants to give up David to him.

Abiathar, the priest, was in the company, and through him David inquired of Jehovah whether the men of Keilah would give him up.

"They will deliver thee up," said Jehovah.

So David and his men went out from Keilah, and when Saul heard that they had escaped him he gave up his expedition.

David remained in the mountains, amongst the strongholds, and Saul searched after him continuously, but God delivered David, so that he could not find him. One day he had the great joy of a visit from Jonathan, who tracked him out in order to cheer him.

## DAVID ATTACKS THE PHILISTINES

"Fear not," said Jonathan, "for the hand of my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee, and that also Saul, my father, knoweth."

Again they vowed to one another before Jehovah, and separated.

David went back to the hills, and Jonathan returned home.

This is the last time, so far as we know, that David and Jonathan met.

## CHAPTER 3

### LIFE IN THE WILD

ANYONE to-day, keen on tramping and hard climbing, could follow out the rough camping ground of David and his followers. Amongst the rocky uplands they would find caves, once occupied by prehistoric cave-dwellers, might chance on the wonderful fountain on the top of En-gedi, and see landscapes of great fertility, and some, as a traveller has expressed it, as desolate as the "mountains of the moon."

David, though an outlaw, was no mere robber chief, such as abounded in those times; but we must constantly remind ourselves as we travel on that men had not yet learnt to love their enemies, and the law of an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" ruled, and led even good men into doing terrible crimes. Judging David by the times in which he lived, we shall see that he was greatly beloved by those who knew him, and that even as an outcast he gathered men about him, brave and loyal on his behalf.

One day he spared Saul's life, when he found him in a cave, sleeping—he could have killed his enemy, but instead, contented himself with cutting off a corner of his robe, as a sign to him later that he did not wish him ill.

The Bible gives us lists of David's "Mighty men," and they must have been a strange company. They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones or in shooting arrows. One of them was said to have killed two lion-like men of Moab, and to have killed an actual lion in a pit on a snowy day.

There is a story of loyalty told us which will prove how David was loved. It happened that he and his men were on the heights from which they could see Bethlehem to the east. Between them and Bethlehem there lay a camp of the Philistines, who had a garrison at Bethlehem.

How often David had wandered on the surrounding hills, seeking pasture for his sheep, enjoying the beauty, and lifting up his heart to Jehovah! And now, as he, an outlaw, looked across the valley, he was homesick for Bethlehem, and homesick for the very water in the well that was by the gate of the city.

"Oh," he cried longingly, "that some one would give me a drink of the water of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!"

Three of his mighty men heard his cry, and they rushed down the hill, across the valley, and up to the gate of Bethlehem. They drew the water from the well, and brought it back to their master. But David would not drink the water. It had become sacred to him, and he poured it out before Jehovah.

"God forbid it me, that I should do this thing," he said. "Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? For with their lives they have brought it!"

We will now follow a curious set of incidents, which give us a vivid picture of life in those times, and which also prove that though David was hot-tempered enough, he was honest up to the standard of his day. We will go to Carmel. Not the Carmel by the sea, but the Carmel of the wild country, west of the Dead Sea. Here there lived a rich man, who owned three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. His name was Nabal, and he is given the character of being "churlish" and mean, but he had a beautiful wife named Abigail.

David, out on the hills, heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep, and knew that food would be abundant, so he sent a polite message asking for supplies for himself and his men.

"Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be to all that thou hast," was the message. "And now I have heard that thou hast shearers. Now, thy shepherds, which were with us, were never hurt, and never missed anything. Ask the shepherds, and they will tell thee. We come in a good day—give, I pray thee,



## LIFE IN THE WILD

whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants and to thy son David."

But when Nabal heard the message he answered scornfully, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away, every man from his master! Shall I take my bread and my water and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?"

So David's messengers brought back the churlish message, and instantly David's anger was roused.

"Gird ye on every man his sword!" he cried, as he girded on his own sword. So four hundred men set forth, and two hundred stayed to take care of the camp.

But one of Nabal's shepherds was very anxious about his master's rude message, and he hurried off to speak to Abigail.

"Behold," he said, "David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master, and he flew out upon them. But David and his men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, so long as we were near them. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them, keeping the sheep. Now, therefore, consider what thou wilt do, for evil is determined against our master and against all his household, for he is such a base worthless fellow, that a man cannot speak to him!"

Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.

And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; behold I come after you!" But Abigail did not tell Nabal.

And so it was that as Abigail rode on the ass, she saw David and his men coming towards her, David was still in a furious passion, as he said to his men, "Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing of his was missed. He is paying me evil for good! I will not leave one of his males alive by the morning light."

And then suddenly he saw a woman dismounting from an ass. She came nearer, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground.

## LIFE IN THE WILD

"Upon me, my lord, upon me," she cried, "let this iniquity be, and let thine handmaid speak in thine ear. Let not my lord lay to heart anything concerning Nabal. Fool is his name, and folly is with him. But I, thine handmaid, saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. Now, therefore, my lord, as Jehovah liveth and as thy soul liveth, seeing that Jehovah hath kept thee back from shedding blood, and from saving thyself with thine own hand, let all thine enemies be as Nabal."

Abigail urged David to accept the present for himself and his company, and she added, "I pray thee forgive the trespass of thine handmaid, for Jehovah will certainly make my lord a sure house . . . the soul of my lord is bound in the bundle of life with Jehovah thy God, and the souls of thine enemies, he shall sling out as from the middle of a sling."

Abigail pleaded that David should have no regrets, when at last he was made king, that he had shed innocent blood.

David had listened, and watched the woman as she pleaded, and his anger died down, and his heart softened, and he raised her and spoke to her gently.

"Blessed be Jehovah," he said, "which sent thee this day to meet me, which hath kept me from shedding blood with mine own hand."

So David accepted the welcome gifts, and his men helped to unload the asses, and Abigail mounted her ass that she might return.

"Go in peace to thy house," said David.

Now, when Abigail reached home, she found that Nabal was holding a feast and was very drunk, so she did not dare to tell him what had happened. But in the morning she told him, and Nabal sat quite motionless with horror at the thought of what might have happened.

And in ten days, Jehovah smote Nabal and he died.

A short time later Abigail had another visit from David's men.

"David sent us unto thee to take thee to him to be his wife," they said. Abigail arose and bowed herself, and her way of saying "yes" to this proposal of marriage will sound strange to us.

"Behold," she said, "let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord."





## LIFE IN THE WILD

Then she hurried and rode off on the ass with the messengers, and with five of her maidens, and came to David, and he made her his wife.

As for his wife Michal, she was lost to him, for Saul had taken her and given her to another man.

David also chose another wife named Ahinoam.

## CHAPTER 4

### SAUL'S LAST WORDS TO DAVID

SAMUEL had died, and a great mourning was made for him in Ramah, for the people honoured Samuel even though they so often neglected his counsel. As for Saul, he was still out against David, determined to destroy him.

"If he be in the land," declared Saul, "I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah."

On a certain day men arrived to tell him that David was in the Wilderness of Ziph, in the wild, rocky country west of the Dead Sea, and Saul started off keenly with three thousand picked men to capture him. But David's look-out men told him of the king's movements, and where he had pitched his encampment.

We have learned that men could see great distances, and David, accustomed to a shepherd's life, could distinguish Saul resting in the camp, and saw that Abner, the captain of the host, was in charge.

Then said David, "Who will go down with me to Saul, to the camp?"

Abishai, his nephew, son of his sister Zeruiah, volunteered to go. So David and Abishai came to Saul's camp by night, and found Saul lying sleeping. His spear was standing upright at his head, and Abner and the company were also sleeping.

Then Abishai whispered to David, "God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand. Let me smite him with the spear, even to the earth, and I shall not have to smite him a second time."

## SAUL'S LAST WORDS TO DAVID

But David answered, "Destroy him not, for who can stretch forth his hand against Jehovah's anointed and be guiltless? As Jehovah liveth, Jehovah shall smite him; or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. But take thou the spear and the cruse of water and let us go."

So David and Abishai hurried away, and no man saw it, nor knew it nor awakened, because a deep sleep from Jehovah had fallen upon them all.

But in the morning David stood on the top of a neighbouring hill and shouted to Abner and the company.

"Who art thou that criest to the king?" called Abner.

"Art thou not a valiant man, Abner?" returned David, "and who is like to thee in Israel? Wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? For there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord! As Jehovah liveth, ye are worthy to die because ye have not kept your master, Jehovah's anointed. But now, see! Here is the king's spear, and the cruse of water that was by his side."

And Saul knew David's voice, and cried, "Is this thy voice, my son David?"

"It is my voice, my lord, O king!" he answered. "Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? For what have I done, or what evil is in my hand? If it be that Jehovah hath stirred thee up against me, let Jehovah accept an offering; but if it be the children of men, cursed be they before Jehovah. Now, therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of Jehovah, for the King of Israel is come out to seek my life, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains."

Then Saul was gripped with sorrow, and he cried, "I have sinned; return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day. Behold I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly."

And David answered, "Behold the king's spear! Let one of the young men come over and fetch it. Jehovah render to every man His righteousness and His faithfulness; for Jehovah delivered thee into my hand to-day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against Jehovah's anointed.

"And behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes,

## SAUL'S LAST WORDS TO DAVID

so let my life be much set by in the eyes of Jehovah, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation."

Then Saul answered, "Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt do great things, and shalt surely prevail."

So the voices ceased, and David went off into the wilderness, for he did not trust Saul, and Saul returned home.

## CHAPTER 5

### DAVID SHELTERS AMONGST THE PHILISTINES

WE shall scarcely believe it when we learn that David at this time lost all faith in Jehovah, and went down with six hundred men to Achish, king of Gath, a Philistine, and offered himself as his servant, if he would give him a city in which he might live.

Achish was flattered to welcome this man who had shown himself so valiant in battle, who had now, as he thought, turned into an enemy of the King of Israel.

He gave David the city of Ziklag, and David lived there with his people and his two wives. But this was a wrong period in David's life, for, even while under the protection of Achish, he was carrying out cruel expeditions in the surrounding districts, about which he told Achish lies. All this deception brought him into great difficulty, for when next the Philistines prepared to give battle to Israel, he found himself in a very awkward position. Was he to fight on the side of the Philistines against his own people? Mercifully, the lords of the Philistines distrusted David, and they got him out of the difficulty by saying to Achish, "David shall not go up with us to the battle."

And when the Philistine army had set forth, David returned to Ziklag, and found that the Amalekites had burned down the city, and carried off all the people, including his wives, into captivity.

So, instead of going to battle against Saul, he set out with the armed men at hot speed to chase the Amalekites. He caught them

## DAVID SHELTERS AMONGST THE PHILISTINES

up, and rescued all the people, his wives, and the spoil that had been taken. He killed all the Amalekites except four hundred men who escaped on camels, for the Amalekites, we shall remember, were men of the desert.

## CHAPTER 6

### SAUL CONSULTS A WITCH

SAUL had now to face another great battle against the Philistines, and his heart failed him. Samuel was dead, so he had no prophet to consult, and David was no longer at his side to help him. And when he inquired of Jehovah as to what he should do, he received no answer.

How Saul longed to pour out his heart to Samuel! For though Samuel had been severe at times, he could have trusted him. The thought came to him that he might consult some witch who would bring Samuel up from the grave to speak with him, or who might at least tell him the result of the coming battle.

Those were days in which people believed in witches and wizards, and Saul had done a good deed in trying to clear the land of them.

The Philistines were encamped in battle array in Shunem, and Saul had gathered his army in Gilboa, and the valley of Jezreel lay between the hosts. As Saul looked across the valley, his heart feared more and more, and he had a foreboding that disaster was on the way. If only he could have spoken to Samuel! After all, Samuel had loved this king he had once anointed.

Then his servants told the king of a witch who lived at Endor, not very far away from the camp.

So Saul disguised himself, and, taking two men with him, he visited the witch that night. Now, when Saul entered the woman's house, he asked whether she could bring up the ghost of some one whom he could name.

But on hearing this the woman was terrified, for she thought he was laying a trap for her, to deliver her up to be executed.



## SAUL CONSULTS A WITCH

But Saul said, "As Jehovah liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing."

Then said the woman, "Whom shall I bring up unto thee?"

"Bring up Samuel!" answered Saul.

Then the woman was more terrified, and as she stared into Saul's face, she cried, "Why hast thou deceived me? For thou art Saul!"

This is a strange story, and we cannot be sure what really happened; but Saul certainly thought that he spoke to Samuel and that Samuel spoke to him.

Alas, Samuel had no good news to give the distressed king. He foretold that Jehovah would deliver Israel into the hands of the Philistines on the morrow, and that Saul and his sons would be slain.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE DEATH OF SAUL

THE Philistines won a great victory near Gilboa, and the Israelites fled before them. Amongst the fugitives were Saul and Jonathan, and two other sons of Saul. The Philistines followed hard after the king and his sons, for the victory would be doubly great if they could kill the members of the royal house.

As Saul ran, he felt himself pierced by an arrow, and, strong man as he was, he knew that he could go no farther.

So he called to his armour-bearer and said, "Thrust me through with thy sword, lest these Philistines slay me or make a mock of me."

But the armour-bearer would not do it, for he was sore afraid. So Saul took his sword, perhaps the very one he had once offered to David, and with his last remaining strength he fell upon it. Thus Saul died, and when the armour-bearer saw that his master was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. The rest of the Israelites fled or were slaughtered, and on the morrow the Philistines came to strip the slain, and they found the bodies of



## THE DEATH OF SAUL

Saul and his three sons. They cut off Saul's head, and stripped off his armour, and proclaimed the joyful news to the Philistines round about. At Beth-shan, close by, there was an idol temple, so they placed Saul's head and the armour within it, and exposed the poor bodies of Saul and his sons on the walls of the town.

We shall remember how the men of Jabesh-Gilead were once rescued by Saul from being blinded, and when they heard of what had happened to him and his sons, the valiant men started out through the night and took down his body and the bodies of his sons from the walls of Beth-shan, and carried them back to Jabesh-Gilead. There they buried them under a sacred tree, and they mourned and fasted for seven days.

We shall realise that during this battle David was at Ziklag, where he had returned with the people and the spoil which he had rescued from the desert raiders, the Amalekites. He had been in Ziklag two days, and on the third day a man came out of the camp of Saul, with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head, as a sign that he was carrying bad news.

"From whence comest thou?" asked David.

"Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped," he replied

"How went the matter?" asked David anxiously. "I pray thee tell me."

"The people are fled from the battle," said the man, "and many of the people also are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan, his son, are dead also."

And suddenly, as David heard the news, he was filled with a desperate sorrow. All his respect and his love for the dead king and for Jonathan laid hold upon him

He would never again soothe Saul with his music, nor talk to Jonathan over all that was in his heart

In his anguish he broke forth into a great lament:

"Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!

How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,

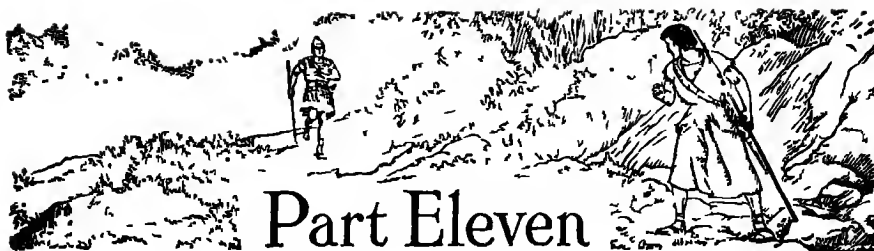
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon,

Lest the daughters of the Philistines triumph.

## THE DEATH OF SAUL

Ye mountains of Gilboa,  
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings,  
For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,  
The shield of Saul, as of one not anointed.  
From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,  
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,  
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.  
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,  
And in their death they were not divided;  
They were swifter than eagles,  
They were stronger than lions.  
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,  
Who clothed you in scarlet,  
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.  
How are the mighty fallen in the battle!  
O Jonathan, slain upon the high places!  
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan;  
Very pleasant hast thou been to me;  
Thy love to me was wonderful,  
Passing the love of women.  
How are the mighty fallen,  
And the weapons of war perished!"





## Part Eleven

### CHAPTER I

#### THE STRUGGLE FOR THE THRONE

**W**HEN David had uttered his wonderful lament over Saul and Jonathan, he went aside to inquire of Jehovah as to what he was to do, for he knew that he was to be king in the place of Saul.

"Go up to Hebron," said Jehovah. So David went to Hebron with his wives, his men, and all their households.

David was of the tribe of Judah, so the men of Judah came out with great joy, and anointed him king over the house of Judah. But David was not yet king over all Israel. His first act was to do honour to the brave men of Jabesh-Gilead, and he sent messengers to them saying, "Blessed be ye of Jehovah, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him.

"And now Jehovah show kindness and truth unto you; and I will also requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

"Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant, for your master Saul is dead, and the house of Judah have anointed me king over them."

Now, Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, and the Benjamites were not going to allow the kingship to pass to the tribe of Judah without a struggle. Saul's captain, Abner, instantly proclaimed Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, as king, and established him on the east side of the Jordan at Mahanaim.

David's capital, Hebron, was a thriving town when Abraham had first entered Canaan, about a thousand years before, and it was at Hebron that Sarah died and was buried in the cave of Machpelah.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR THE THRONE

To-day, there is a Moslem Mosque over this very cave, and it is held as a most sacred place.

Now, there came a day when Abner sallied forth with Ish-bosheth's army, and Joab, David's captain, went out to meet him. The armies met at the Pool of Gibeon, which was in those days probably a lake or reservoir. Abner's men were on one side of the pool, and Joab's men were on the other side of the pool.

And Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men now arise and play before us!"

"Let them arise!" said Joab.

We shall soon know what this "playing" meant.

Twelve of Joab's men and twelve of Abner's men came forward for deadly combat. Each man was killed, and, as we shall expect, a fierce battle between the rival armies followed. Abner was beaten, and fled for his life, but Asahel, Joab's brother, was as swift of foot as a wild roe, and he chased Abner doggedly, never looking to the right or the left. Then Abner turned and cried:

"Art thou Asahel?"

"I am!" he answered.

Abner implored Asahel to stop the chase, for he knew that, if it came to a fight, he was the stronger man and would be sure to kill Asahel, yet he was anxious to avoid killing Joab's brother.

But Asahel refused the warning and dashed on, until he came so close behind Abner, that Abner, in self-defence, pushed out his spear backwards, and caught Asahel a death-blow with the shaft of his spear.

All that day Joab's men pursued the men of Ish-bosheth, until the sun began to go down. Abner and his men were on the top of a hill, and Joab and his men were within earshot, and through the gathering gloom Abner shouted a message:

"Shall the sword devour for ever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?"

And Joab answered nobly enough, and blew the trumpet, and all the people stood still, and neither side fought any more.

They buried Asahel in Bethlehem, in the family grave, and then Joab and his brother Abishai and the army marched through the night, and arrived at Hebron at break of day, to tell David the news.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR THE THRONE

There was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

### CHAPTER 2

#### JOAB PLAYS A DASTARDLY TRICK

It happened that during this miserable conflict between the tribes, Joab was away foraging, and Abner arrived bringing twenty men with him. David welcomed Abner, and made him a feast; for he was weary of this strife, and was longing that the tribes should unite as one nation, to serve Jehovah and free themselves from the Philistines.

He was glad, therefore, when Abner said, "I will arise and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth."

David was only too thankful to agree, and he sent Abner away in peace.

But when Joab and his men returned, he was instantly told what had happened: "Abner, the son of Ner, came to the king, and he hath sent him away in peace."

Joab went in to the king and spoke roughly enough: "What hast thou done? Why is it that thou hast sent Abner away, and he is quite gone? Thou knowest that he came to deceive thee, and to know all that thou doest!"

We do not know what David replied, but Joab, without saying anything to David, sent secret messengers to ask Abner to return.

Abner, thinking that David had something further to say to him, hurried back to Hebron; and when he reached the gate, Joab met him and drew him aside, as though he would speak peacefully to him. But instead of that, he murdered him, in revenge because Abner had killed his brother Asahel.

When the news of this terrible deed came to David he was greatly distressed, and he cried, "I and my kingdom are guiltless

## JOAB PLAYS A DASTARDLY TRICK

before Jehovah for ever from the blood of Abner, the son of Ner."

For to kill a man in battle or open fight was considered **fair**, but to kill one who had been a guest and sent away in peace was considered to be a very disgraceful act.

Then David commanded Joab and the people to mourn publicly for Abner.

"Rend your clothes and gird you with sackcloth," he commanded.

The king himself followed the bier on which Abner had been laid, that he might be buried in a Hebron grave. David wept at the grave, as did the people, and he broke out in a lament:

"Shall Abner die as a fool dieth?

Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put in fetters.

As a man falleth before wicked men, so didst thou fall!"

The people, pitying their king, implored him to take food, for he was quite broken down with grief. But David answered, "So do God to me and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down."

And all the people took notice of the way their king had acted, and it pleased them; as whatsoever the king did pleased the people.

And the nation understood that David had had nothing to do with the assassination.

"Ah!" said David to his own servants; "know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? And I am this day weak, even though appointed king, and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, be too hard for me. Jehovah shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness."

David never got over this treachery of Joab, and unfortunately he never forgave it

But the king was to have yet another shock. Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was now in great fear when he heard that Abner was dead, and that the tribes were turning round in favour of David. Yet David wished Saul's son no evil. One day, however, he was horrified at receiving two men who brought him the head of Ish-bosheth. They explained proudly that they had gone to Ish-bosheth's house, and had murdered him as he lay on his bed,

## JOAB PLAYS A DASTARDLY TRICK

during the heat of the noon-day. They fully expected to receive a reward for the horrible act.

"Behold," they said, "the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, thine enemy which sought thy life! Jehovah hath avenged my lord the king of Saul and his descendants."

They must have been terrified indeed as they saw the anger rush into the king's face.

"They have slain a righteous man on his bed!" cried David, and for this deed, they were immediately executed. The poor head of Ish-bosheth was laid with all honour in Abner's grave.

It was certainly not going to be an easy task to rule over Israel, as we shall see.

And now let us stop for a moment to notice the way we are going. We have followed the Children of Israel through the wilderness, and through their conquests and their defeats in Canaan. We have seen the throne set up, Saul rejected, and David placed in power.

But very soon the real interest of our journey will centre round the prophets and the noble-hearted men, whether kings or ordinary people, who rose up to fight wrong and idolatry, and who tried over and over again to bring the nation back to Jehovah. The kings, we shall find, will disappear, the tribes will be scattered, some of them will again return to the Promised Land, and at last we shall hear a wonderful question asked:

"Where is He that is born, King of the Jews?"

## CHAPTER 3

### DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL

**THERE** came a day when the Elders of Israel came to David and invited him to be king over all the land, and David was therefore anointed king at Hebron. But Hebron was too far south to be a suitable capital, if all the tribes were to be brought together as one united nation.

Following the mountain range from Hebron, we arrive at Bethlehem, and a few miles farther north to a city occupied by the



## DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL

Jebusites, which the Israelites had not yet been able to conquer. This city was built on different levels, and though the lower hills were occupied by the Israelites, the central rock was still held by the Jebusites. The Jebusites were a hill tribe, and when they heard that David was advancing upon them with thirty thousand men, they sent him a mocking message. "The blind and the lame," they said would be able to defeat him. Very little is told us of the conquest of this city, but David did win through to the rocky centre, and instructed his soldiers not to hurt either the blind or the lame, for he had no quarrel with them.

This stronghold was named Jerusalem, and became of great importance—and has indeed been a centre of history right onward to the year in which we now live.

David established himself in the fort, and called the city the City of David, and he strengthened the walls and built himself a palace.

The King of Tyre, whose kingdom was in the north, including some of the coast of the Great Sea, was very friendly to David. He supplied him with cedar trees for his palace, and sent skilled carpenters and masons to help in the work. The cedar trees would come by sea, roped together in great rafts, guided by sailors, and would then be carried overland from Joppa to Jerusalem.

But the Philistines were certainly not pleased to hear of the new king's power, and they soon spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim to do battle. David set forth into the district round about the cave of Adullam, which he knew so well, and met the Philistines and gained a great victory.

David was sure that Jehovah had been with him, and meant to establish him in his kingdom. But he was not happy, because the Ark of God was still at Kerjath-jearim, in the house of Abinadab, where it had been ever since the cows brought it back from Philistia. He felt that the proper place for the Ark was now at Jerusalem, so that it might be the centre of the worship for all the land.

So a great procession set forth to Kerjath-jearim, and the rejoicing crowds, led by the king himself, passed through the lovely countryside, too broken for much corn, but rich in olives and vines.

Abinadab and his sons had taken great care of the Ark, and it was now brought out and placed upon a new cart. Then David and

## DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL

the people played before Jehovah on all sorts of instruments such as lyres, lutes, drums, rattles, and cymbals, and there was singing, and many joined in the great religious dance as they passed along towards Jerusalem.

But while they were about to rest by a threshing-floor, something mysterious happened. The oxen drawing the cart stumbled, and the Ark of God shook; so one of Abinadab's sons, named Uzzah, put out his hand to steady it. Suddenly he fell down dead.

The rejoicings came to an end, for all believed that Jehovah had killed Uzzah for daring to put his hand upon the sacred Ark. David himself was troubled, and was so afraid of Jehovah that he exclaimed, "How shall the Ark of Jehovah come to me?"

So, instead of taking the Ark up the steep ascent to Jerusalem, David commanded it to be carried to the house of a man named Obed-edom, and all the procession returned to Jerusalem. But Jehovah blessed Obed-edom and all his family during the three months that the Ark remained under his care.

One day one of David's servants said to him, "Jehovah hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all who belong to him, because of the Ark of God."

So David took fresh courage, and brought the Ark to Jerusalem in safety, amidst much music and singing and dancing. David acted as priest, and blessed the people in the name of Jehovah, and when all was over, and the people returned home, he gave to every woman and every man a cake of bread, a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine or bunch of raisins.

The boys and girls are not mentioned, but we may be sure that they enjoyed the good things with the rest.

## CHAPTER 4

### A HOUSE FOR GOD

THOUGH David had prepared a Tent for the reception of the Ark, his heart and his mind were not satisfied. He could not endure to think that while he lived in a splendid palace, Jehovah's House should be but a tent, beautiful as this tent might be.

## A HOUSE FOR GOD

So David called Nathan the Prophet, and told him his thoughts, and asked his advice.

"See now," said David, "I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains."

Nathan was delighted that the king should have this thought, and he answered cordially, "Do all that is in thine heart, for Jehovah is with thee."

But Nathan had spoken too hastily, and that night Jehovah spoke to Nathan and gave him a different message for the king. David was not to build a house for God of gold and cedarwood. The house he was to build was a house in his own heart and his own family. It was in David and his seed that God wished to dwell.

David was amazed at such a message from the prophet, and he went apart alone, to sit before Jehovah in great reverence.

"Who am I, O Lord God," he said, "and what is my house that Thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in Thine eyes, O Lord God, but Thou hast spoken of Thy servant's house for a great while to come. And what can David say more unto Thee, for Thou knowest Thy servant, O Lord God."

David reminded Jehovah of what He had already done for Israel, and prayed that Jehovah would indeed be their God.

David asked that God would dwell in his house, and he was quite honest in this, but he little knew how he himself was far from worthy to make a dwelling for God in his heart, and he could not know that his descendants would do many wrong things, and break down Jehovah's beautiful plan for their happiness.

David did not know, either, that on a certain "Christmas" night one of his descendants would be born in a poor manger in Bethlehem, and would become the Light of the whole world.

## CHAPTER 5

### MEPHIBOSHETH

DAVID still continued to have fierce and dreadful wars with the nations round about, and he defeated Moabites, Syrians, Philistines,

## MEPHIBOSHETH

Amalekites, and others. Even though he longed for peace, he seemed to be always fighting.

One day David, who had never forgotten his love for Jonathan, said to his servants, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

Then the servants brought forward a man named Ziba, who had once been one of Saul's men.

In those days it was quite common for a new king to destroy all the males of the family that had reigned before him, to avoid the risk of rebellion or assassination, and it was no wonder that Jonathan's son had been living in retirement. This son, Mephibosheth, was only a little lad when the news came that Saul and Jonathan had been killed in battle, and his nurse had run off with him in such terror that she had dropped him, and injured him, so that he was lame on both his feet.

Ziba knew all about Mephibosheth, and when David asked him whether there were any left of the house of Saul to whom he could do kindness, Ziba answered, "Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet."

It was news indeed that Jonathan had a son, and when Ziba brought the young man a message, that David the king had sent for him, he was filled with terror. There was nothing for it but to go, and when Mephibosheth came into the presence of David, he fell on his face and did him reverence.

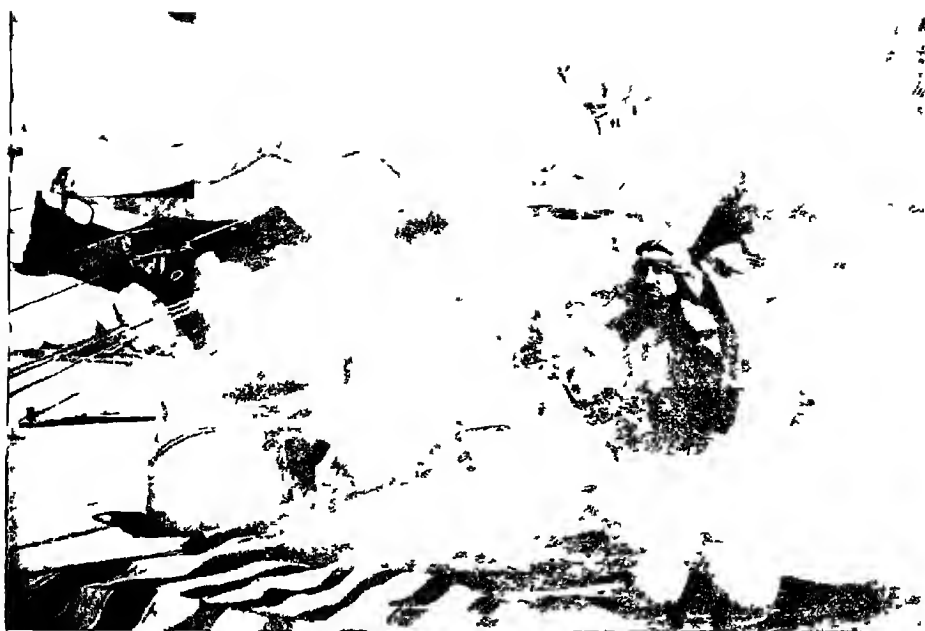
But David smiled kindly enough as he said, "Mephibosheth!" "Behold thy servant!" came the humble reply.

"Fear not," said David, "for I will surely show thee kindness for thy father's sake, and will give thee the property of thy grandfather Saul, and thou shalt be a member of my court, and eat at my table, like a prince."

"What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am!" exclaimed Mephibosheth.

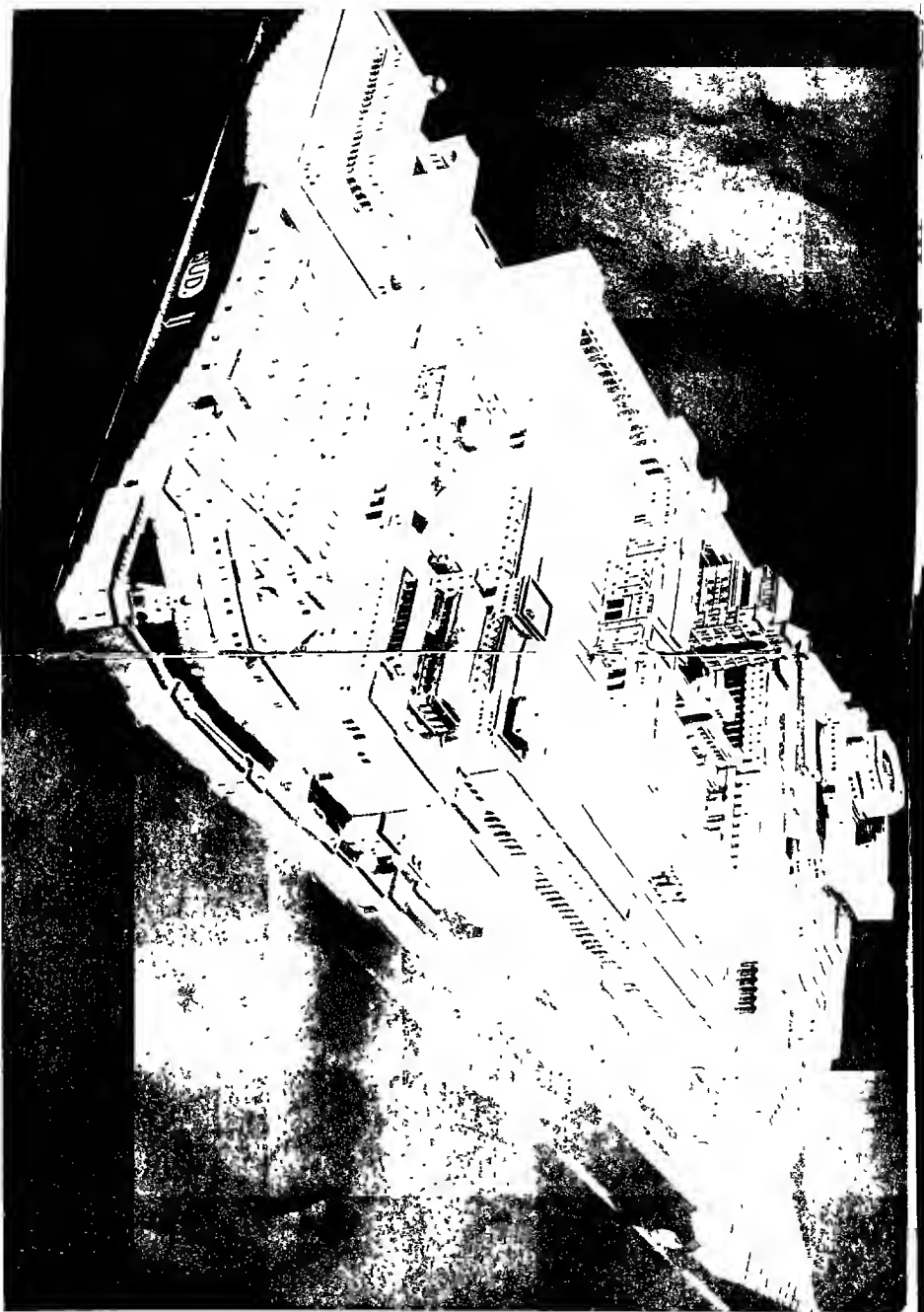
But David called Ziba, and appointed him as steward for the young prince, to look after his property, and Ziba was delighted enough to have the chance of making a good profit out of the business, for he himself had fifteen sons.

But Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem and ate at the king's table.



Tents of the desert, unaltered for centuries, look, seen from above, like  
a crowd of beehives





A model of Solomon's Temple, built to scale according to the measurements given in the Bible.



"This 'Law of Moses' went on growing long after Moses himself was dead, but it was still called by his name. Little by little it was inscribed by hand on the rolls, and by the time that Jesus was a boy in Nazareth there were many such rolls kept in the Jewish synagogues"—and still are

## DAVID'S SIN

### CHAPTER 6

#### DAVID'S SIN

It is always hard to see a good man do wrong, but the Bible does not spare us from knowing this wickedness which David did.

One day the Prophet Nathan was greatly distressed at being told by Jehovah to go to the king and reprove him for a terrible crime he had committed. War was still going on, and Joab, David's chief captain, was in the field, and there was with him a soldier named Uriah. Uriah was not an Israelite, but belonged to the old Hittite nation which had been in Canaan before the Israelites entered.

Now, Uriah had a beautiful wife named Bath-sheba, whom David had set his heart upon marrying, and when Uriah visited Jerusalem from the battlefield, David thought of a wicked plan by which he might get Bath-sheba as his wife.

He wrote a letter to Joab, which he sent by Uriah. David must have known that Uriah was an honourable man, and would deliver the letter faithfully, without opening it, and so he did. But this letter—even Joab must have been amazed at receiving such a wicked command from the king.

"Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die."

So Joab went out and examined the city of Rabbah, which they were besieging, and chose a likely spot where Uriah would be certain to be killed, for the enemy's most valiant men were there. The men of the city went out and fought with Joab, and some of the Israelitish army were killed and amongst them was Uriah.

Then Joab sent a messenger to David, and the messenger tried to explain the defeat.

"Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them, even unto the entering of the gate. And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants, and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah is dead also."

Then David made answer, "Let not this thing displease thee, for



## DAVID'S SIN

the sword devoureth one as well as another. Make thy battle more strong against the city and overthrow it, and encourage thou Joab."

So the messenger returned to Joab, and when Bath-sheba heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him, as was the custom; and when the mourning was over, David sent and fetched her to his palace, and she became his wife.

But the Bible tells us:

"But the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of Jehovah."

It was after a little son had been born, and David and his new wife seemed very happy, that Nathan went to David.

The prophets were brave men, for they had often to take their lives in their hands when they felt compelled to say stern things to their kings or their peoples. But when David saw Nathan he welcomed him, for he had been crushing down his guilty conscience, and never guessed what Nathan was going to say.

Nathan had his parable ready, and here it is:

"There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought up and nourished, and it grew up together with him and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a daughter.

"And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it."

David listened intently, and his anger rose against this rich and greedy man.

"As Jehovah liveth," he cried, "the man that hath done this thing is worthy to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

But what was David's horror when he found Nathan's eyes fixed sternly upon him, and heard him say:

"Thou art the man! Thus saith Jehovah of Israel, 'I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul.' Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of Jehovah, to

## DAVID'S SIN

do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife."

We are glad that David made no excuse, but allowed his conscience to speak, and he cried out in his misery, "I have sinned against Jehovah!"

Then Nathan answered, "Jehovah hath put away thy sin. Thou shalt not die."

But Nathan told David that, inasmuch as he had shamed Jehovah before the people, the child whom he loved so tenderly must die. So it came about that the child became sick unto death, and David besought Jehovah to spare it; and he would eat no food and lay all night upon the earth. His friends tried to persuade him to rise and eat, but he would not; and on the seventh day, the child died.

The servants now feared to tell David that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive we spake unto him, and he would not hearken; how then will he vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?"

But when David saw that his servants whispered, he understood only too clearly that the child was dead.

"Is the child dead?" he asked

"He is dead," they answered.

Then David rose and washed, and anointed himself and changed his clothes, and went to the House of Jehovah, and worshipped; and afterwards he returned to his palace, and ate what his anxious servants set before him.

They were quite puzzled, but David explained, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether God will be gracious unto me, and the child may live?' But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me."

We shall notice that David had faith that his beloved child was alive, safe with Jehovah, and that one day they would meet again.

We shall shortly hear of another young prince, whom Jehovah, out of love and pity, took away to Himself.

## ABSALOM'S REBELLION

### CHAPTER 7

#### ABSALOM'S REBELLION

As David grew older, he had some sad troubles in his own family; but the worst came through his favourite son Absalom. Absalom had murdered one of his brothers out of revenge for a wrong he had done, and David felt obliged to banish him from the kingdom. Yet David still loved him, and longed to see him again, and at last the time came when Absalom was received back into favour, and returned to Jerusalem and the court.

This son was a fine handsome fellow, and very popular with the people, and he made up his mind that when his father died he would be king instead of the young prince Solomon, who had been born to Bath-sheba after her first baby died. Worse still, Absalom nursed the idea that he would drive his aged father from the throne.

So he thought out a clever scheme by which he might entice the nation to rally round him. While living in Jerusalem, and pretending to be great friends with his father, he made himself very important. He drove out in a grand chariot, with fifty men running before him, so that all the people might stare and admire.

Besides this, he made a habit of rising early and going to the gate of the city, where, as we know, people gathered to get their disputes judged and settled. Many of them had some complaint or grievance which they wished the king to judge, and they did not like to be kept waiting. The handsome young prince was ready to come forward with great friendliness.

"See, thy matter is good and right," he would say, "but there is no one deputed of the king to hear thee! Oh, that I were made a judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice."

When any man came near to bow before him, Absalom put out his hand to him and kissed him.

So Absalom stole away the hearts of the people from the king. This went on for about four years, and as the people came from all parts of the kingdom, they spread the idea up and down the land

## ABSALOM'S REBELLION

that this splendid young prince would make a better king than his father.

At last, thinking that the time was ripe, Absalom asked the king's leave to go to Hebron, the very place south of Jerusalem where David had started his reign.

"Go in peace!" said David, for he had no idea of the treason his son was working.

But, meanwhile, Absalom had sent messengers out to the tribes, saying, "When ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, 'Absalom reigneth in Hebron.'"

Absalom invited two hundred guests to his feast at Hebron, and it is fair to them to say that they had no idea of Absalom's plot.

But Absalom gained over to his side one of his father's chief counsellors, whose name was Ahithophel.

The conspiracy grew strongly, for the people flocked to Absalom, and a messenger rushed to David and said, "The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom."

It is hard to imagine David's shock and amazement when he heard this astonishing news. He had trusted Absalom so completely, and loved him so dearly.

We should expect that the lion-hearted David would have roused himself to fight for his kingdom, but he did not do so. Perhaps he was growing older and wiser, or more anxious to submit to the will of God. His sin in murdering Uriah may have weighed him down, and he had lost confidence and strength. At any rate, he decided to take immediate flight, so that Absalom should not overtake them suddenly and smite Jerusalem with the edge of the sword.

The king's loyal servants made no protest, and answered, "Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall choose."

But David had many people around him who loved him dearly, and it must have been terrible for them to see their king set forth down the steep hill from Jerusalem, on his way to the other side of the Jordan.

David must have been touched when Ittai, a Philistine, who commanded six hundred men from Gath elected to stand by him.

David remonstrated with him and said, "Wherefore goest thou

## ABSALOM'S REBELLION

also with us? For thou art an exile, and seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and mercy and truth be with thee."

But Ittai answered as reverently as though he were a born Israelite, "As Jehovah liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also shall thy servant be."

"Go then, and pass over," said David. His heart was too full to remonstrate any more.

So Ittai passed over with all his men, and the women and the little Philistine children, to follow King David who had been so kind to them. As the sad procession passed along, the people wept with a loud voice. Zadok and Abiathar the priests arrived, bearing the Ark, but David commanded that it should be returned to Jerusalem.

"Carry back the Ark of God into the City," he said. "If I shall find favour in the eyes of Jehovah, He will bring me again. But if He say 'I have no delight in thee!' behold, here am I; let Jehovah do to me as seemeth good unto Him."

Zadok had a son named Ahimaaz, and Abiathar had a son named Jonathan, and it was decided that they should return to the city and act as messengers if they were needed.

Then David went up the ascent of the Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and he went barefoot, and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping.

Then some one told David that his valued counsellor, Ahithophel, had deserted to Absalom, and as they reached the top of the mount, David worshipped Jehovah, and afterwards he noticed another counsellor, named Hushai, come and bow before him. Hushai had torn his tunic, and earth was upon his head.

David was glad to see him, and suggested that he should make friends with Absalom, so that he could defeat the counsel which Ahithophel might give. He was to go to Jerusalem, and give any news he might obtain to Zadok and Abiathar, so that their sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, might bring it to David.

A little later Ziba arrived, with bread and raisins and fruits and wine. His story was that his master, Mephibosheth, had remained in Jerusalem on the chance that he might be made king.

## ABSALOM'S REBELLION

Ziba's story was probably a lie, as we shall see later.

As David passed on, a man named Shimei sprang out from amongst the rocks, and shouted angry curses at David and his people and flung stones. He was of the family of Saul, and he cried:

"Come out, come out, thou man of blood! Jehovah hath returned upon thee the blood of the House of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned, and Jehovah hath delivered thy kingdom into the hands of Absalom."

Abishai, David's nephew, wished to slaughter Shimei, but David had no heart for such an act.

"Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?" cried Abishai. "Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head."

But David rebuked his rough and eager servant, and said quietly, "So let him curse, because Jehovah hath said unto him, 'Curse David.' Who shall therefore say, 'Wherefore hast thou done so?'"

"Behold my own son seeketh my life; how much more may this Benjamite do it? It may be that Jehovah will look on my tears, and will requite me good for his cursing this day."

So David and his men passed on, and Shimei went on cursing and throwing stones and casting up dust.

At last they reached the Jordan, and, being very weary, they rested and refreshed themselves there.

## CHAPTER 8

### ABSALOM ENTERS JERUSALEM

THERE was a very different scene in Jerusalem, when Absalom rode in triumph from Hebron. There was no opposition to the new and self-appointed king, and Absalom held a council of war. Ahithophel gave wise counsel. He advised Absalom not to waste a moment, but to pursue David and his company, and force a fight while they were tired.

"Let me," he urged, "choose out twelve thousand men, and pursue after David this night. I will smite the king only, and bring back all the people unto thee!"

## ABSALOM ENTERS JERUSALEM

The advice pleased Absalom, but he also wished to hear what Hushai had to say. So Hushai, who was really on David's side, said firmly, "The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time. Thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field; and thy father is a man of war, and behold now, he is hid in some pit."

Hushai warned Absalom that even if he had a small defeat, the people thought of David as such a mighty man that their hearts might melt with fear, for they all knew that David had the heart of a lion, and that his men were valiant. He counselled that Absalom should not risk a battle until he had gathered all Israel together as the sand by the seashore, and that he should go in person and lead the people in the battle.

"So," he added, "we shall come upon the king, and light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground, and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one."

"Moreover, if David be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one stone left there."

Absalom was pleased with Hushai's advice, and refused to follow Ahithophel's wiser counsel; and Ahithophel was so distressed that he went away and hanged himself. But Hushai went straight to Zadok and Abiathar, and told them what had happened, and advised them to send to David and bid him to cross over Jordan at once.

Now, Ahimaaz and Jonathan were waiting in the neighbourhood, and a maid-servant brought them the message; but as they went off to tell David, a lad saw them and went and told Absalom.

So the two escaped and hid in a well in a courtyard, and a woman laid a covering over the well's mouth and spread ground corn on it. So the two escaped their pursuers, and reached David in safety, and gave him the message.

That night the king and all who were with him passed over Jordan, and some of the people, especially an old man named Barzillai, were very kind to the company, and supplied them with couches and basins and earthen vessels and wheat and barley and parched corn, and lentils and honey, butter, sheep, cheese, and everything they needed.

## ABSALOM ENTERS JERUSALEM

Clearly a battle must come, and David divided his soldiers into three companies, over which Joab, Abishai, and Ittai were to be captains. David wished to advance with his men, but the people utterly refused to let him go.

"Thou art worth ten thousand of us!" they protested. "It is better that thou be ready to help us from the city."

"What seemeth you best, I will do," said David, for he had no spirit to oppose them.

So David stood by the gate, and the people came out by hundreds and by thousands. But David had one important command for his captains.

"Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom!" he insisted, and all the men heard him give this charge.

The battle was fought amongst woodland country, and David's men won a great victory. Indeed, it was said that the wood devoured more than the sword.

It came about that Absalom, who was riding a mule, came face to face with some of David's men. As he passed under an oak, his head was caught between the branches, and the mule escaped, leaving his rider hanging between heaven and earth.

"Behold," said an eager messenger to Joab, "I saw Absalom hanged in an oak."

"Then why didst thou not smite him?" exclaimed Joab. "I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle!"

But the man said, "Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son, for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.'"

But Joab hurried off and thrust darts through Absalom as he hung there, and Joab's armour-bearers slew him. So Joab blew a trumpet, and called back the soldiers, and they cast Absalom into a deep pit, and filled it up with stones.

Ahimaaz was keen to run off at once to tell the king the news; at first Joab refused to let him go, and sent off a Cushite follower instead. But at last Ahimaaz begged so hard to be allowed to go, that Joab consented. Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran the Cushite, and arrived first.

Now, David was seated by the gate of Mahanaim, and on the



## ABSALOM ENTERS JERUSALEM

tower, over the gateway, a watchman was standing, and suddenly he saw a man running alone, and he told the king.

"If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth," said David.

Then the watchman called to the porter, "Behold another man runneth alone!"

"He also bringeth tidings!" said the king anxiously.

Then the watchman said, "Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok."

"He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings!" said David.

Then Ahimaaz called out, "All is well!"

He fell down before the king and said, "Blessed be Jehovah, which hath delivered up the men that lifted their hand against my lord the king."

"Is the young man Absalom safe?" asked David.

But Ahimaaz suddenly felt that he dared not answer this question, and he said, "I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was."

But by this time the Cushite had arrived, and he called joyously, "Tidings, my lord, the king. Jehovah hath avenged thee this day, on all those who rose up against thee!"

"Is the young man Absalom safe?" asked David.

"The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is!" came the dreaded answer.

Then David knew the truth, and it was as though his heart would break with sorrow for his disobedient and traitorous son.

He turned from the messengers, and went up into the chamber over the gate, and wept

"O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

So the victory was turned into mourning, for the people heard how grieved the king was for his son. Indeed, they stole back to the city as though they were ashamed.

As they passed through the gate, they could hear the king's bitter cry:

"O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

## ABSALOM ENTERS JERUSALEM

But Joab, when he returned, was very displeased with his master, for he knew that David was endangering his kingdom.

"Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants who have saved thy life!" said Joab. "In that thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends, thou hast shown that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

"Now therefore arise, go forth and speak comfortably unto the soldiers and the people, for I swear by Jehovah that if thou go not forth there will not tarry one with thee this night; and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now."

So David was persuaded, and came out to the people, for he knew that Joab was right

He prepared to return in triumph to Jerusalem. But when Shimei came and fell down with his face to the ground before David, and Abishai wished to slay him, David answered, "Shall there be any man put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that I am this day king over all Israel?"

But now Mephibosheth arrived, riding on a mule; and he bowed down to David, and explained that his servant Ziba had slandered him, but that Ziba might take all his property, now that the king had returned in safety.

Before setting out for Jerusalem, David took leave of one old and true friend, Barzillai, who had provided nobly for the king's company. David longed for Barzillai to return with him to Jerusalem, but he said he was now too old, and that he would only be a burden. So David, at Barzillai's request, took his son Chimham into his service, and the king parted from the loyal old man with a kiss and a blessing.

## CHAPTER 9

### WHEN DAVID GREW OLD

WE shall remember how solemnly Samuel warned the people that the rule of a king might bring down trouble upon them. Certainly Saul as king had had to pass through a sea of troubles, and

## WHEN DAVID GREW OLD

so had David. History teaches us that a kingdom often means a mighty scramble for the vacant throne on the death of a king. This was to happen in the Kingdom of Israel.

David was growing old and feeble. He had lost much of his power of mind and judgment, and though he had won back the heart of the nation, people were talking openly as to his successor. It was no secret that the king's choice amongst the princes was Solomon, Bath-sheba's son; but David had another son named Adonijah, who was determined to make a big effort to secure the throne. Like Absalom, he rode in a chariot with fifty men running before him, and David spoiled him and never denied him anything.

Adonijah persuaded Joab to stand by him, and how he won over Abiathar, David's faithful friend, we do not know. At last he took a great step: he invited all his brothers except Solomon to a Feast outside Jerusalem, together with Joab and Abiathar.

Now, Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet were faithful to David, and when Nathan heard this news he went to Bath-sheba, Solomon's mother.

"Hast thou heard," he said, "that Adonijah doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? Let me give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon."

So Nathan told Bath-sheba what to do, and she went straight to the king, who was very feeble and bedridden, and she bowed before him.

"What wouldest thou?" asked the king.

Then Bath-sheba told her lord of the rebellion, and of her fear that Solomon would be robbed of the throne; and while she was speaking, Nathan came in.

What a lonely man David must have been! As he now lay on his sick-bed, he had time to think over his strange life, and be sorry for some things he had done—and be glad for others. He had won great affection, he had established the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem, and he had already collected much treasure for the temple which was to be built by Solomon. He had won great victories and his kingdom was now at peace; yet in his past life there were acts which would hardly bear thinking of. David must have longed again and again for those early and beautiful days

on the Bethlehem hills, when he watched the sheep and thought thoughts of poetry, and knew Jehovah as his "Shepherd."

But as Bath-sheba and Nathan told the story, the aged king was roused to action. All his hope and ambition for the building of a House for Jehovah would fall asunder unless Solomon followed him on the throne. Though he was fond of Adonijah, nothing must stand in the way of Solomon's succession.

David commanded that Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah, the valiant servant who had once killed a lion and two cubs in a pit on a snowy day, should take Solomon instantly, and place him on the king's mule, and bring him down outside Jerusalem.

There they were to anoint him king, and to blow with the trumpet, and cry, "God save King Solomon!"

"Then," said David, "he shall sit upon my throne, for he shall be king in my stead; and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah."

And Benaiah answered, "Amen! The Jehovah God of my lord the king say so too. As Jehovah hath been with my lord the king, even so be He with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

The three men did as David commanded, and the young prince was led forth on the king's mule, and Zadok, having brought a horn of sacred oil from the sanctuary, anointed Solomon as king.

There was wild excitement in Jerusalem, and the people came out singing and dancing and piping with their flutes. They were so happy and glad, and they made so much noise, that the very earth rent with the sound of them.

"God save King Solomon!" they cried over and over again.

Meanwhile, the feasting was going on to the honour of Adonijah, only a short distance away, and suddenly Joab sprang up on hearing the sound of the trumpets. What did the trumpets mean? Why was there this uproar in Jerusalem?

Then the young man Jonathan, Abiathar's son, who had once helped David by hiding in a well, came rushing in, for he was now filled with alarm for his father's safety.

"Verily, our lord King David hath made Solomon king!" he cried. "He rides the king's mule, and Zadok and Nathan have anointed him king. This is the noise ye hear!"

## WHEN DAVID GREW OLD

As Jonathan poured out his news, there was terror in many eyes. The guests rose from their places, and one by one they hurried away, leaving Adonijah alone.

What could the young prince do? He rushed back to Jerusalem, and made for the sacred tent, and laid hold on a corner of the altar. This seemed to be his only hope of safety from the wrath of his brother, for it was not considered right to kill a man who claimed sanctuary at an altar.

The new king was told that his brother refused to leave the altar, saying, "Let King Solomon swear to me to-day, that he will not slay his servant with the sword."

Solomon sent his brother a reassuring, yet a stern message.

"If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth; but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die."

So Solomon sent and brought his brother away from the altar, and Adonijah bowed himself low before the new king.

"Go to thine house," said Solomon.

The old king was dying; shortly after Solomon had begun his reign he kneeled before his father to receive his blessing and his last charges.

"I go the way of all the earth," said David "Be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man. Keep the charge of Jehovah, to walk in His ways, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest."

It seems a pity that David did not stop here, but he further instructed Solomon to watch his chance to execute both Shimei and Joab for the wrongs they had done.

This instruction is considered to be one of the blots upon David's memory, and the only excuse is that David had grown weak both in body and in spirit. He had not learnt that to forgive an enemy is nobler than to destroy him, and as we look forward into the future we shall hear Jesus, the "Son of David," saying, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." But it took about a thousand years before men began to understand this.

So in the end both Joab and Shimei died at Solomon's command. As for Adonijah, he also offended Solomon and paid the price with his life.

All down the future history of the Israelites, the name of

## WHEN DAVID GREW OLD

King David was honoured. He was looked upon not only as a national hero, but as the founder of a royal house which was to continue for ever.

We shall discover, as we travel on, that any chance of an earthly throne vanished as soon as the kings disobeyed Jehovah and refused to lead the people in the way of truth. But the throne of David will continue for ever through the King who was born in Bethlehem, and who was descended from the royal line.

David, in spite of his sins and mistakes, was loyal to Jehovah, and his passion was to establish the worship of Jehovah in his kingdom.

"As for me," said David, in a farewell speech to his people, "I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah, and for the Footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building.

"But God said unto me, 'Thou shalt not build an house for My name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.'"

We shall have heard of the Psalms of David. Very few of these psalms were actually written by him, but they were called by his name.

The Psalm which begins, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," was almost certainly written by David, and it gives us a peep into David's character, which we should miss without it.





## Part Twelve

### CHAPTER I

#### SOLOMON'S WISDOM

**S**OLOMON was an able organiser, and he was full of ambition to make his kingdom great. His father had overcome many enemies, and Solomon entered upon a reign of peace.

One night, after he had been offering sacrifices, Jehovah appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Ask what I shall give thee!"

Solomon in his dream answered, "O Jehovah, my God, thou hast made Thy servant king instead of David my father, and I am but as a little child. Give Thy servant an understanding heart, that I may know what is good and what is evil, so that I may govern Thy people. For what man is able to judge such a great people?"

Jehovah was pleased that Solomon had not asked for long life, for riches, honour, nor the death of his enemies, and he said to Solomon, "Behold I have done according to thy words; lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.







## SOLOMON'S WISDOM

"And if thou wilt walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as thy father did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

And Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream.

As time went on, Solomon's wisdom was recognised, and in the Bible there is a book called the Proverbs of Solomon. He wrote only certain ones of them, but the whole collection was called by his name, just as the Psalms are called the Psalms of David, and as the Law that developed century after century, was called the Law of Moses.

The East was famous for its proverbs, fables, and riddles, but we are told that Solomon was wiser than all the wise men of Egypt and Assyria, and that he spoke three thousand proverbs, and knew of one thousand and five songs. He could give stories or fables of plants, from the cedar to the tiny wall hyssop, and he knew the habits of birds and beasts, insects and fishes. No wonder that people travelled from the nations round about, to see such a king and to hear his wisdom!

One day Solomon stood before the Ark, and offered burnt offerings, and made a feast to his servants. And there came two women in before Solomon, to ask for the king's judgment.

"O my lord," said one of the women, "I and this woman dwell in one house. There was no stranger with us in the house, and one night this woman's child died, because she overlaid it, and accidentally smothered it, and she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while I slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.

"When I rose in the morning to feed my child, behold it was dead; but when I considered it, I saw that it was not my child."

But the other woman cried eagerly, "Nay, but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son!"

And the first woman answered, "No, but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son."

The young king listened, and his servants round about waited to hear what he would say:

"The one saith, this is my son that liveth, and thy son is dead; and the other saith, Nay but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living. Bring me a sword!"

## SOLOMON'S WISDOM

So they brought a sword.

"Divide the living child in two," said the king, and give half to the one, and half to the other."

Solomon did not really intend to kill the living baby, but he watched the faces of the women, to see what they thought of the terrible command.

Then the woman to whom the living child really belonged, cried, "O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it!"

But the other woman said carelessly, "Let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it!"

Then the king motioned away the man with the sword, and said to the first woman:

"Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. She is the mother thereof."

The news of this wise judgment spread far and wide, and the people feared and respected the new king, for they saw that the wisdom of Jehovah was in him.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY

So Solomon was king over all Israel.

This is the first great fact about Solomon's reign: the people were united under his rule, at least for a time, and he had peace with the nations round about, and made treaties and received tribute from far and near. Each family lived in safety from north to south, and though Solomon could not compare with the mightiest of the kings of Egypt and Assyria, he was a very great monarch.

The second fact is that he was the last king who reigned over all Israel, and his short spell of "glory" soon vanished away, and we shall discover the reason.

By the map we see that The Land of Israel lay as a roadway for trade between the Great Sea and the East. Solomon had the

## SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY

wisdom to establish a fleet on an arm of the Red Sea, the harbour of which was at Ezion-geber. From this port trade could be carried on to the far east, even possibly as far as India and China.

In order to keep his Great Sea trade with the west, Hiram, the King of Tyre and Sidon, to the north of Canaan, was only too willing to make a treaty with Solomon, and to help him in his enterprises. Solomon was determined to build a Temple for Jehovah, a Palace for himself, and other buildings; so he asked Hiram for fine cedar trees, for which he promised to pay, and to pay also for the labour of cutting them down, for the Zidonians were more skilled at forestry than the Israelites.

Hiram sent a cordial message, saying, "Blessed be Jehovah this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people. I will do all thy desire, concerning timber of cedar and fir. My servants shall bring them down to Lebanon unto the sea, and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shall appoint "

So Hiram supplied the timber, and Solomon's side of the bargain was to supply Hiram with twenty thousand measures of wheat and twenty measures of pure oil, year by year. Solomon also handed over some towns to Hiram in what was afterwards Galilee.

Solomon also wanted massive stones from the quarries, cut and squared, and for this work he needed forced labour. Some of these labourers were Israelites, but a number of them were non-Israelites, who had remained in Canaan. This forced labour was to bring trouble, as we shall see.

Hiram supplied Solomon with a very skilled workman, also named Hiram, whose mother was an Israelite. He was skilful in working in gold, silver, brass, iron, stone, and in timber, and in weaving wonderful colours, and in engraving. Solomon set seventy thousand men to be labourers, and eighty thousand to be wood-cutters in the mountains, and there were to be three thousand three hundred overseers, to set the people to work. A man named Adoniram was placed over all this work, and he became very much hated, as we shall hear.

The nation toiled for seven years before the Temple was

## SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY

completed, and Solomon's own palace took thirteen years to build. Solomon also built a sumptuous house for one of his wives, a daughter of an Egyptian Pharaoh. Indeed, Solomon took many foreign princesses as wives, and later he built temples for their gods, and worshipped their gods with them. This will seem strange to us, when we know of the beautiful Temple he built for Jehovah. But even in Solomon's time the gods of the other surrounding nations were treated as worthy of honour, though an Israelite would put Jehovah head of them all.

Solomon's court and government needed vast daily supplies, and we shall not forget what a very small country Canaan was. We read of forty thousand stalls of horses to be arranged for, and every day the court required thirty measures of fine flour, sixty measures of meal, thirty oxen, and a hundred sheep, besides harts and roebucks, fallow deer, and fatted fowl. Officers were organised to travel up and down the land to collect these supplies, and we shall believe that the people began to feel that they were paying too dearly for the splendour of their king.

The quantity of bronze or brass used was so enormous that its weight could not even be counted. Many tons of gold from Ophir, Solomon's and Hiram's fleets brought, besides silver, ivory, and even apes and peacocks. It is not certain where Ophir was. It may have been the name of some part of Arabia, Africa, or even India.

Solomon made two hundred shields of beaten gold, of which we shall hear again, and even the plates upon his table and the vessels he drank from were of solid gold. As for the silver, it was so plentiful that it was scarcely valued. The king's throne was of ivory, probably on an Egyptian pattern, and was overlaid with gold. There were six steps up to it, and a carved lion stood on each step to right and left of the throne.

"No such throne was ever made in any kingdom," so the record boasts.

He also built a huge structure called the House of the Forest of Lebanon, marvellously designed with rows of cedar pillars, and another of his buildings was the "Porch of Judgment" in which he judged causes.

But, of course, his masterpiece was the Temple.

## THE TEMPLE

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE TEMPLE

THE Temple was not a large building compared with some of the gigantic temples of those days, nor even compared with the rebuilt Temple which existed in the days of Jesus. But it was famous for its exquisite design and workmanship. Much of it was overlaid with pure gold, and from the carved pillars to the smallest service vessels everything united to make it a gem of beauty.

In front of the Temple Hiram had set up two marvellous columns or pillars, cast in bronze. They were over thirty feet high, and the capitals for the tops of the pillars were nine feet high. These were ornamented with two rows of pomegranates.

Beside this, we might have seen a great sea or laver, seventeen feet in diameter and over eight feet high. Twelve molten bulls supported this "sea," three facing north, three south, three east, and three west, with their faces outwards.

It was a great day, indeed, when Solomon could call together the nation for the Jesture ceremony of dedicating this Temple. The Sacred Ark and the sacred things that had been in the ancient Tent of Meeting were brought to the new Temple in solemn procession, led in person by the king. Sacrifices were offered, and great feastings took place.

When the priests came out of the Temple after taking in the Ark, the Glory of Jehovah filled the building. This glory was so splendid that the Priests could not stand and serve.

There was nothing inside the Ark now except the two tablets of stone which Moses had received from Jehovah.

It is important to notice that there was no image of a god in the Temple, but only the sacred Ark, containing the Law of Jehovah, the Invisible God.

Solomon himself was filled with wonder, as he cried, "Jehovah hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built Thee an house of habitation, a place for Thee to dwell in for ever."

Then Solomon turned to the people, and blessed them, as they

## THE TEMPLE

stood before him. And afterwards he stood before the altar with his arms stretched out to heaven, and uttered a prayer.

Here are some of the petitions which the chronicler has left for us:

“Jehovah, God of Israel, there is no God like Thee, in heaven above or on the earth beneath, Who keepest covenant and mercy with Thy servants, that walk before Thee with all their heart.”

“Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house that I have builded.

“Yet have Thou respect unto the prayer of Thy servant, which Thy servant prayeth before Thee to-day.

“And hearken Thou to the supplication of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel, when they shall pray towards this place, and hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place; and when Thou hearest, forgive.”

“What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all Thy people Israel, which shall know, every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this House; then hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart Thou knowest; for Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of

When Solomon had finished his prayer, he blessed the people again, and there was joy and feasting for fourteen days. Before they went back to their homes they thanked the king, and went back joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodness that Jehovah had done for David and for Israel his people.

News of this wonderful Temple, and of this wonderful and wise king, spread through the nations, and reached far-off Sheba in Arabia, which was ruled over by a queen. The Queen of Sheba determined to see and to hear King Solomon, and she set forth with a great train, with camels carrying spices and gold and precious stones.

## THE TEMPLE

Solomon received her courteously, and when she poured out strange questions about things that puzzled her, Solomon satisfied her in all she asked.

And when the Queen of Sheba had heard all Solomon's wisdom, and seen the house he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up to the House of Jehovah, there was no more spirit in her.

"It was a true report," she said, "that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it, and behold the half was not told me; thy wisdom and thy prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be Jehovah thy God, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because Jehovah loved Israel for ever, therefore made He thee king, to do judgment and justice."

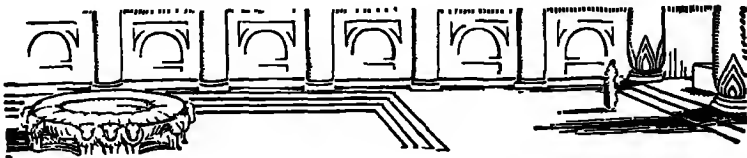
The Queen gave Solomon a vast amount of gold and spices and precious jewels, and the king gave the Queen whatever she asked for to take back with her to her own land.

It will be clear to us already that such ostentatious magnificence and luxury could only lead to one end. The Kingdom was bound to fall, as all such kingdoms have fallen. All the good in Solomon lived on, but the "glory" faded away.

Let us think of Jesus about a thousand years later, sitting on the hillside, perhaps holding lilies which a child had brought him.

He said to the Jews, who were so proud of their one flash of Empire, "Consider the lilies of the field . . . I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these!"

And again he spoke to those proud Jews who would not believe in him, "The Queen of the South came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but a greater than Solomon is here."







## Part Thirteen

### CHAPTER I

#### THE BREAK-UP OF THE KINGDOM

**T**HE real break-up of the kingdom began during the reign of Solomon, but it only showed itself openly after his death.

Solomon reigned for forty years; and though there is no doubt that the people were proud of the splendour to which he had raised the nation in the eyes of the world, there were rumblings of discontent and wrath long before the end of his reign. The great building operations, the magnificence and luxury of the Court, had to be paid for by the systematic bleeding of the general population in labour and taxes.

There was, however, a second reason why the kingdom was bound to fall. We shall remember how careful Abraham, the father of the race, was that his son Isaac should marry a woman who understood about Jehovah.

Solomon, in order to form an alliance with Egypt, had married an Egyptian Princess, had built her an exquisite Palace outside Jerusalem, and arranged for the worship of her gods. More than

## THE BREAK-UP OF THE KINGDOM

that, as it was a sign of splendour for an Eastern monarch to have a great many wives, Solomon married seven hundred heathen women, who stole away his heart from the worship of Jehovah.

The king still worshipped at the Temple, and the sacrifices and the services and the singing still went on; but he also paid respect to his wives' gods, such as Ashtaroth, Molech, and Chemosh. Such action was a sad example for the people, who were only too easily led into the worship of false gods, and it broke down the whole beauty of Solomon's reign.

There came a time when Jehovah spoke very plainly to the guilty king.

"Forasmuch as this is done of thee and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

"Howbeit, I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son for David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, which I have chosen."

Who was this servant? His name was Jeroboam, and Solomon had set him in a high position because he found him industrious, and a valiant man.

One day, when Jeroboam was walking outside Jerusalem, Ahijah the prophet from Shiloh met him. To Jeroboam's surprise the prophet took his new cloak from him, and tore it into twelve pieces. Handing back ten pieces, he said, "Take these ten pieces, for thus saith Jehovah the God of Israel, 'Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee. Unto Solomon's son I will give one tribe, that David, My servant, may have a light always before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen to put My name there. And I will take thee and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. If thou wilt do what is right in My sight, as David My servant did, I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. And for this I will afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.'"

What the prophet had done became known, and Jeroboam had to escape for his life into Egypt to Shishak, who was the King

## REHOBAM'S FOLLY

### CHAPTER 2

#### REHOBAM'S FOLLY

HISTORIES are apt to tell us a great deal about kings and governments and armies and battles, and very little about the ordinary life of the people. As we travel on, we shall find that the real interest in the story moves to the actions of the Prophets and the good and earnest-minded men and women who longed for peace and happiness through serving Jehovah.

Unfortunately, the good people often suffer through the fault of the bad and the careless; but we are sure that there were many who would have liked to turn this little country of Canaan into a land where Jehovah ruled, as an example or light to the heathen nations round about. Instead of this, the poor land was torn with quarrels, and even with war, and the glory of Solomon's reign became a dream of the past.

When Solomon died, Rehoboam, his son, ascended the throne, and gave his father a magnificent funeral in Jerusalem. As the acknowledged heir, he went off to Shechem, where Jacob had once lived, for it was a good central place at which to meet the general assembly of the nation. But already swift messengers had gone off to Egypt to bring Jeroboam back, and Rehoboam found him at Shechem, at the head of a strong party, and ready to speak on behalf of the discontented people. Rehoboam was, however, given a fair chance, and he faced the people and heard their complaints about the grinding taxes and the forced labour.

As we listen we shall remember that, more than a hundred years before, Samuel had warned them as to what would happen if they insisted upon having a king to make them like the nations round about.

Jeroboam took it upon him to speak, and he said to the new king, "Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee."

Rehoboam, who had been brought up in a court of luxury, idleness, and self-indulgence, was evidently startled at the outburst,

## REHOBAM'S FOLLY

for he had taken it as a matter of course that he would be as his father had been. So he asked for three days, in which he might prepare his answer.

"Depart yet for three days, and come to me again," he said.

So the people went away, and we can imagine that there was much talk and argument, and that Jeroboam was at hand, ready to put ideas into their minds. Rehoboam had a great chance to turn the aggrieved people back to him, yet he missed it completely.

First he consulted with the older men who had been in close touch with his father. They understood only too well that there was a deep undercurrent of discontent rising amongst the people, and they advised the young king to speak kindly and reasonably as he opened his new reign.

"If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever."

But Rehoboam frowned at such advice. He had no intention of "serving" the people. The people must "serve" their king.

So he turned from the older men who knew so well the present danger, and asked a group of his young companions what he should do. He got just the foolish advice he was looking for, and on the third day he faced the people at Shechem again.

He could not or would not see the danger-signs on those angry and anxious faces, nor understand that Jeroboam was amongst them, eagerly waiting for the excuse to push himself forward to the throne.

"My father," he cried roughly and confidently, "made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins."

Instantly the maddened crowd saw that there was no hope and no redress from this young king, and as the cruel words ceased, the uproar broke out.

"What portion have we in David?" they yelled. "What inheritance have we in the son of Jesse? To your tents, O Israel! Now see to thine own house, David!"

It was a clear declaration of rebellion, and when Rehoboam, as a last act of folly, sent along Adoram, his father's hated officer,

## REHOBAM'S FOLLY

who had been responsible for the forced labour-service, thinking that he might have the power to intimidate the people, they rose up in fury and stoned Adoram to death.

There was nothing now for Rehoboam to do but to escape to Jerusalem, as swiftly as his chariot-horses could gallop. But even yet he would not face the facts. He gathered together a powerful army, that he might fight against Jeroboam and conquer the rebel tribes. By civil war, Israelite against Israelite, he still thought he might win back the kingdom. But a prophet named Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and brought him a message from Jehovah.

"Thus saith Jehovah, 'Ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren, the Children of Israel; return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me!'"

So those who belonged to the Kingdom of Judah, as we must now call it, were convinced that it was useless to carry on the struggle at this time, and they returned to their homes. There were now two kingdoms in this tiny country, the Kingdom of Judah, ruled from Jerusalem by a descendant of David, and the Kingdom of Israel, which included the Tribes other than Judah and Levi, to be ruled by Jeroboam, so long as he remained faithful to Jehovah.

But almost immediately Jeroboam used his power to insult Jehovah.

His action was quite sensible from his point of view. He worked it out that if the tribes still went up to Jerusalem for their feasts and sacrifices, they would make friends with the people of Judah, and might not only wish to change their allegiance, but to kill him, Jeroboam.

It seemed quite necessary that he should establish a special religious worship for the ten tribes now loyal to him. They were northern and north-eastern tribes, so Jeroboam decided to make two golden calves as centres of worship. One he placed in Dan, at the extreme north, and the other at Bethel, where Jacob once dreamed his wonderful dream, and which had always been a sacred place.

Here he commanded the people to worship Jehovah, and he forbade any of his subjects to go up to Jerusalem. As the Priests and the Levites remained loyal to the Temple services, Jeroboam

## REHOBOAM'S FOLLY

had to choose his priests from amongst the lowest of the people.

"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem," he told the people. "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

These were the very same words that Aaron said, when he made a golden calf in the Sinai plain, while Moses was absent on the holy mount.

Thus the Northern and Southern Kingdoms became more definitely divided. Yet this division must have been a grief to many who still loved Jerusalem and the beautiful temple, and we must remember that there was constant intermarriage between the tribes, and the northern tribes must have had relatives amongst the southern tribes and the southern tribes amongst the northern ones.

We shall not be surprised that Jehovah was displeased with the way Jeroboam had acted, and we now come to a story about a little boy named Abijah. In this we learn that Jehovah loved Abijah very specially, and wished to take him away from the evil household of his father, Jeroboam. This boy was loved very dearly by his parents, and was a favourite with the people, and we learn that he was true and loyal to Jehovah, perhaps in the same way as the boy Samuel was loyal and true. We do not know who taught Abijah about Jehovah, but in some way he had learnt. So it came to pass that on a certain day this beloved child fell sick. The illness was so serious that the parents were in agony. Strangely enough, though Jeroboam was leading the people away from Jehovah, he now wished, in his own trouble, to get word from one of Jehovah's prophets. He thought of the prophet Ahijah, who had once given him those ten pieces of his torn cloak, but somehow he was now ashamed to go to him.

So he directed his Queen to disguise herself, and take with her ten loaves, some cakes, and honey, which was the sort of present a poor woman would take to a prophet. Now, Ahijah was old and blind, but Jehovah had given him warning that this visitor was coming, and as the Queen arrived at his door, he called to her, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why pretendest thou to be another woman? I have hard tidings for thee!"

## REHOBAM'S FOLLY

Jeroboam's wife remained silent, for she knew only too well what the hard tidings would mean.

"Arise, get thee to thy house!" he said, "and when thy feet enter the city, the child shall die. And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him; for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there was found some good thing toward the Jehovah God of Israel.

"Jehovah shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and He shall root up Israel out of this good land that He gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their Asherim, provoking Jehovah to anger."

Jeroboam's poor wife knew that this was all true, and she went sadly away; and when she reached the threshold of her home, the child died.

They buried him, and all Israel mourned for him.

As for Jeroboam, he reigned for twenty-two years, and led Israel into much sin and evil, so that he was called "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

## CHAPTER 3

### IN THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

JEROBOAM's story is a sad one, but it is worse to think that in the Southern Kingdom, the kingdom of Judah, the same evil idol-worship went on, even though the beautiful Temple was at Jerusalem for all to see, and the sacred Ark was kept as a sign that the presence of Jehovah was there.

The only excuse for Rehoboam was that his mother was an Ammonitish princess, who taught him idol-worship and trained him in the wrong way. But having been corrupted by Solomon, the people worshipped on high places, and forsook the Temple and the laws which Moses had left for them.

Trouble came after Rehoboam had reigned in his tiny kingdom for five years. Shishak, the King of Egypt, now came against Jerusalem, and won such a victory that he was able to take off to Egypt the wonderful golden vessels which Solomon had collected.

## IN THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

He carried away the golden shields, and Rehoboam had to content himself with making brass ones to take their place.

It is not clear how much war there was between Rehoboam and the Northern Kingdom; but after reigning for seventeen years Rehoboam died, and left a son named Abijam to reign in his stead. Abijam was as wicked as his father; but we are glad to read that his son, Asa, who succeeded him, was a good man, who honoured Jehovah.

He cleared most of the idols from the land, and served Jehovah; but alas for the treasures that were left at Jerusalem! Asa sent them off as a present to Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, so that he might attack the king of Israel who was seeking to prevent any of his people from entering the kingdom of Judah.

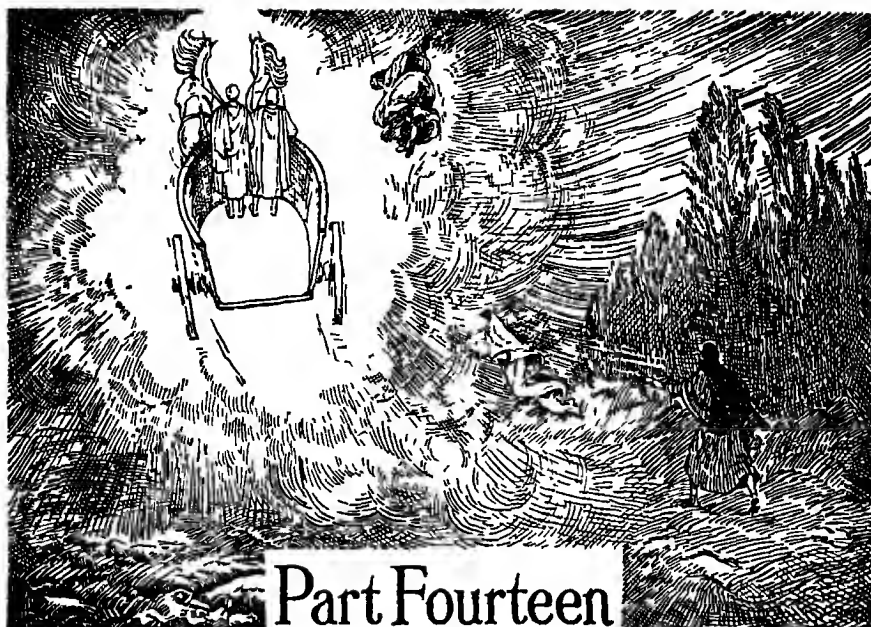
We can imagine how miserable this state of things was, for wars and disputings were spread all over this land which ought to have been at peace. One after another of the kings of Israel were slain or murdered, and there was endless rebellion and disorder in this Northern Kingdom.

It was when Asa still reigned in Jerusalem that a king, renowned for his wickedness and for the wickedness of his wife, reigned in the North. This king's name was Ahab, and his father, Omri, had done worse in the land than any before him. It was Omri who is reported as having built the city of Samaria, which became the capital of the Northern Kingdom, and of which we shall hear so much as we travel forward.

Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. He worshipped idols; he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he had built in Samaria, and led the nation into such Baal-worship as had not yet been.







## Part Fourteen

### CHAPTER I

#### THE COMING OF ELIJAH

**A**BOUT fifty years after the division of Israel into two kingdoms, we read this startling sentence:

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab: ‘As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except according to my word.’”

Who was Elijah? We know no more than this sentence tells us.

Who was Ahab? Ahab was the seventh king of Israel, for within fifty years there had been six other kings in the Northern Kingdom. War and conspiracy and assassination had gone on, and two of the kings had reigned for only two years each, and another was on the throne for just seven days.

So we can see how terrible all this was for the ordinary people, many of whom, in their hearts, would have been only too willing



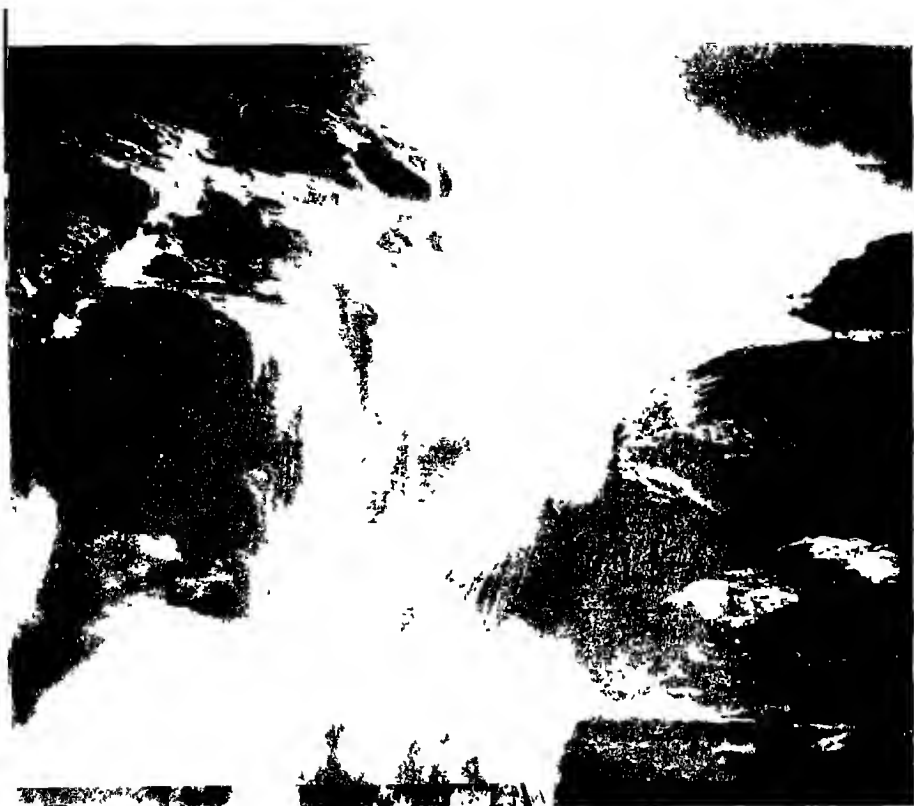
"He asked Hiram for fine cedar trees"—though most of the famous Lebanon cedar groves were cut down during the World War of 1914-1918, one or two still remain exactly as in Solomon's time



"His great sea trade with the West"—a Phoenician ship



"Daughters of the Prince of Midian, draw water" — as daughters in the East do this day.



"This river in ordinary times is but a small brook; but it can become in a storm a roaring tropical river. It sweeps on with resistless force."

## THE COMING OF ELIJAH

to follow a Jehovah-honouring king. But many of the people, too, were sunk in idolatry and evil ways, and these kings, without exception, led them along a ruinous path.

It is not clear how much war there was between the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel; but it was a miserable condition of things for such a small land to be divided, town against town, and pasture lands against pasture lands—for there were no boundary forts between the two kingdoms, and the people could pass easily from one to the other.

Ahab has come down to history as one of the particularly wicked kings of Israel. His capital was in Samaria, which stood high, and which his father, Omri, had built. We shall hear again and again of Samaria, for it became very important in the Bible story. The trouble with Ahab was not only that he worshipped idols himself, but that Jezebel was of a fierce, dominating nature, who 'stirred up' her husband to evil; and she was specially devoted to the worship of Baal, of whom her father, the king of Zidon, was Priest. Her great ambition was to set up the worship of Baal as a national religion. She not only supported numbers of priests of Baal, who carried on the idolatrous rites, but she had even dared to massacre priests of Jehovah.

Elijah loved the people of Israel, and hated to know of all that was going on. He had lived through days when king struggled against king, and when all hope of peace had faded away. He had watched the growing power of the Baal-worship and the general advance in wickedness, and his heart was stirred to deep fury, through loyalty to Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Elijah is one of the great characters in Israelitish history, and it was he who was chosen with Moses to meet Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration many hundreds of years later. His passion for the true God drove him to fierce deeds, for he did not care who suffered as long as he could bring men and women to the worship of Jehovah.

This Baal-worship stirred the stern prophet to the depth of his being. Let the whole land suffer, if by any means the people could be brought to see their sin, and turn to Jehovah! Therefore the Prophet issued his fierce command that famine should devour the land.

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Such a threat meant that Elijah's life was in danger, and Jehovah told His servant that he must go and live beside the brook Cherith.

"It shall be," said Jehovah, "that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

We do not know exactly where the brook Cherith was, but again we find one of Jehovah's servants being sent away to a lonely spot, so that he might live in His presence and learn more of Him.

Morning and evening Elijah waited confidently for the ravens, who brought him meat and bread; and so long as the brook flowed he had plenty of water. But Elijah himself had prayed to Jehovah to stop the rain, so it could have been no surprise when at last the brook dried up.

Elijah must have wondered what he ought to do now? He scorned to ask for rain, even to save his own life; for he knew that the people were still worshipping Baal, and turning their backs upon Jehovah. Better to die of thirst himself, than help his beloved nation to continue in sin.

But Jehovah spoke to him and said, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

Zidon was outside the Kingdom of Israel, and was indeed in Jezebel's own country, and Elijah had to take a long journey up the east side of the Jordan, and then westward. It must have been a sad and painful one, too, for the signs of the famine were everywhere in the scorched land.

On reaching the gate of Zarephath, Elijah noticed a widow-woman gathering sticks. He called her and said politely, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."

There was still water in the city, and as the woman turned to fetch it, Elijah added, "And bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand."

The woman paused and looked at this stranger intently; she must have noticed that he was an Israelite, and she addressed him in the name of his God.

"As Jehovah thy God liveth," she said, "I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and, behold, I am gathering sticks, that I may go and cook it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."

## THE COMING OF ELIJAH

The Prophet answered her gently, "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and thy son. For thus saith Jehovah of Israel, 'The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the earth.' "

There was something about this strange prophet which made the woman sure that she might trust Jehovah of Israel. So she hurried away, and took some of the precious meal, and made a cake with the oil (which was commonly used instead of butter). She took the cake to Elijah, and all happened as the Prophet had said. Elijah stayed with her and her son, and there was always meal in the barrel and oil in the cruse, however much she used.

But, alas!—one day the son fell ill, and though his mother nursed him devotedly, he died. In her misery, the woman remembered things she had done wrong in her past life, and she thought, as was generally thought in those days, that the death of her son had come as a punishment. She came to Elijah, who had been such a true friend to her, and told him her trouble.

"O thou man of God," she cried, "art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and slay my son?"

Elijah was very sorry for the woman, and he had learnt to love the boy.

"Give me thy son!" he said kindly.

He lifted the child from his mother's arms, and carried him to his own upper chamber, and laid him down on his bed. Then this strong, fierce man broke down in a passionate prayer to Jehovah, to save the little child:

"O Jehovah, my God, hast Thou brought evil upon the widow by killing her son?"

Then he leaned over the child and cried, "O Jehovah, my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again!"

And Jehovah heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. The cold, still body grew warm, the eyes opened—to meet the kind smile of the Prophet who was bending over them.

Elijah lifted him tenderly in his strong arms, and brought him down from his chamber, and delivered him to his mother.

"See," said Elijah: "thy son liveth!"

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The anxious mother must hardly have been able to believe it, yet as she clasped her son in her arms, she exclaimed, "Now, by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of Jehovah in thy mouth is truth!"

### CHAPTER 2

#### JEHOVAH OR BAAL?

WE are glad that we have seen Elijah bending in tender affection over the body of a little child, for now we must try to understand a very different side to this Prophet. Through all his story we must think of him as being devoted to the people, and that it was a terrible grief to him to know that they were being misled and brought into sin and trouble by the wickedness of Ahab, Jezebel, and the prophets of Baal.

Famine spares neither kings nor peoples, and Ahab, who was too weak a man to stand up against his wife, called his head steward, Obadiah, into consultation, for it appeared that the valuable chariot horses were in danger of starvation. Now, Obadiah was loyal to Jehovah in secret, for when Jezebel had begun to slaughter the prophets of Jehovah, Obadiah had hidden a hundred of them in a cave, and had supplied them with bread and water.

By this incident we shall see not only that Obadiah was a brave man, but that there were many people in the land who still honoured Jehovah, and who were in great grief because of the king's actions.

"Go," said Ahab to Obadiah, "into all the land, unto all the fountains of water, and unto all the brooks; peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts."

So Obadiah went one way, and the king went another way, to search for grass.

But Jehovah had already said to Elijah, "Go show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth."



## JEHOVAH OR BAAL?

And suddenly, as Obadiah was walking over the hard, burnt ground, he looked up and saw Elijah.

Obadiah instantly fell on his face before him and said, "Art thou my lord, Elijah?"

"I am!" he answered. "Go tell thy lord, 'Behold, Elijah is here!'"

But Obadiah rose up, greatly dismayed. "What is my sin?" he cried, "that thou shouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab to slay me? As Jehovah liveth, there is no nation or kingdom whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee! And when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath of them that they had not seen thee! Yet now thou sayest, 'Go tell thy lord, behold Elijah is here!' It shall come to pass, that as soon as I am gone from thee, the wind of God shall carry thee whither I know not, and so when Ahab cometh and cannot find thee, he will slay me!"

"As Jehovah liveth," said Elijah, "before Whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto the king to-day!"

So Obadiah trusted Elijah, and hurried off to tell his master the news

But when Ahab arrived and saw the Prophet for whom he had searched for so long, standing quietly waiting for him, his petulant anger rose.

"Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" demanded the king.

"I have not troubled Israel," said Elijah sternly. "It is thou and thy father's house who have troubled Israel, in that ye have forsaken the commandment of Jehovah and followed Baal."

Ahab had no answer for this charge, and he waited, feeling sure by the flashing eyes of the Prophet that he had more to say.

"Go," commanded Elijah, "and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty."

Ahab felt himself compelled to obey, and he sent out a proclamation to gather the people together, and the news spread through the stricken land that Elijah had appeared. Mount Carmel overlooked the Great Sea; the river Kishon flowed eastward from this mountain, the river by which, long ago, Sisera's host had been defeated by Deborah the prophet.

Now what was this Prophet, outlawed by their king, about to do? Yet what could be worse than this dreadful famine? There

## JEHOVAH OR BAAL?

were many who knew perfectly well how deeply they had sinned against Jehovah; so, full of curiosity and fear, the people assembled from all around.

We shall notice that it was the Prophet and not the king who was in authority to-day. Elijah was fearless enough; yet, as he stood out before them all, the man who had been responsible for the famine, how easily some one might have thrown a stone and killed him! But now the stern question was asked, to which the people dared not give any answer.

"How long will ye stumble?" thundered Elijah. "If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal be God follow him!"

The words seem like some echo of Joshua's voice, as he cried to the people to choose between Jehovah and the false gods.

"I, even I only," cried Elijah, "am left as a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty. Let them therefore give us two bullocks, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under it; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. Call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah, and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

"It is well spoken!" cried the people in a mighty shout.

It shows how far the people had been deluded, for though some of them, no doubt, hoped that Jehovah would prove himself to be God, there were others who really thought that Baal could and would send down fire.

The prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice first, and from morning until noon they cried to their god:

"O Baal, hear us!"

But there was no voice, nor any that answered. In their excitement they leaped about the altar, and Elijah, as he stood watching them, cried mockingly:

"Cry louder! For he is a god! Perhaps he is talking, or is busy, or on a journey; or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked."

So the priests cried louder, and cut themselves with knives, until the blood gushed out upon them. They went on in this way all the hot afternoon, yet no fire came, and no voice of Baal was heard, nor any sign that he was listening.

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At last, as the sun began to descend, Elijah said to the people, "Come near to me."

This was the hour when, far away in Jerusalem, the Evening Sacrifice would be being offered in front of the Temple. So the people gathered closer, and watched as Elijah built up an ancient altar of Jehovah which was broken down. He laid the wood and the bullock on the altar, but set no fire under it. They were surprised when Elijah dug a trench right round the altar, and they wondered what was the reason.

"Now," said Elijah, "fill four barrels with water, and pour the water over the sacrifice and the wood "

This they did until all was sopping wet

"Do it a second time!" he ordered, and they obeyed.

"Do it a third time!" he ordered, and now there could be no doubt that no one could play a trick which would light such a water-drenched sacrifice

But Elijah was not yet satisfied, and he filled the trench also with water, and then the Prophet came near and prayed

"O Jehovah, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel!" he cried, "let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Jehovah God, and that Thou hast turned their hearts back again to Thyself "

Then the fire fell, and burnt up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and licked up the water in the trench,

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and cried, "Jehovah! He is the God! Jehovah! He is the God!"

As for Ahab, he watched the whole proceeding in helpless consternation. Ought he not to interfere? What would Jezebel say to him when he told her what had happened?

"Arrest the false prophets of Baal!" ordered Elijah. "Let not one escape."

Certainly Ahab was not prepared to execute these false prophets, so Elijah had them taken by the repentant people down to the river Kishon. Here Elijah slew them, and Ahab dared not say one single word to save them.

At last Elijah had a command for the guilty king.

## JEHOVAH OR BAAL?

"Get thee up, eat and drink, for I hear the sound of abundance of rain."

But Elijah went away with his servant to a lonely spot on Carmel, and cast himself down on the earth, and put his face between his knees.

Presently, he said to his servant, "Go up now, and look towards the sea."

So the servant went and looked, and returned to his master, and said, "There is nothing."

"Go again, seven times!" said Elijah.

And it came to pass at the seventh time, that the servant returned and said, "Behold there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand."

Then Elijah sprang up

"Hurry down to Ahab," he said, "and tell him: 'Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.'"

So the servant hastened away, and, as Elijah paused, the heavens became black with clouds, and the wind sprang up, and torrential rain began to fall.

Ahab was driving off in his chariot to Jezreel, down the valley towards the east. But the people saw a strange sight: Elijah tightened up his girdle, and ran the whole way in front of the chariot, to the entrance of the city.

Rain! Before ever the excited people could get back to their homes, the rain had come. The wells and the streams were filling up, the hard ground was softening, and tiny children, who could not remember having seen or felt the rain, must have rushed out joyfully, not caring how wet they became. Rain in the cities, rain in the country, and the Jehovah-loving men and women everywhere lifted up their hearts in thankfulness to the Jehovah of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Was Elijah welcomed at Jezreel? We do not know whether the people cheered as he arrived as a runner before the King's chariot. But when Ahab told his Queen the great story, her brows darkened, and her proud spirit revolted against this prophet. For Jezebel cared nothing for the sorrows of the people. There was no gladness in her heart that the rain had come. She had a cruel nature, and

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when Ahab told her that the priests of Baal had been executed, her fury knew no bounds.

Swiftly she sent off a messenger to Elijah.

"So let the gods do to me and more also," came the message, "if I make not thy life like the life of one of Baal's prophets, by to-morrow about this time."

## CHAPTER 3

### ELIJAH ON MOUNT HOREB

As soon as Elijah heard Queen Jezebel's message, he wasted no time, but fled for his life towards the south. He took his servant with him, and passed through the Kingdom of Judah to Beer-sheba. Then he sent away his servant, and took a day's journey into the "Wilderness of Judah" which David had known so well, and having flung himself down under a bush, he asked Jehovah that he might die.

"It is enough!" he cried. "Now, O Jehovah, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers."

Elijah was grievously disappointed with the way things had turned out. The people had shouted against Baal, and apparently turned to Jehovah; yet here he was, escaping from the wrath of an angry woman.

We shall remember that gods were associated with particular places at that time, and Jehovah was associated in the minds of the Israelites with Mount Sinai or Horeb. A thought came to Elijah, that if he could travel all the way back to Horeb, he might in a very special way find Jehovah.

He lay down and tried to sleep, and behold an angel touched him, and said, "Arise and eat!"

Elijah started up, and saw no one, but at his side there was some bread baking on hot stones, and a cruse of water.

He ate, drank, and lay down again.

But a second time the Angel touched him.

"Arise, eat, for the journey is too great for thee!"

## ELIJAH ON MOUNT HOREB

So Elijah ate and drank, and felt within him a new and God-given strength.

He was able to live on that mysterious food for forty days and forty nights, and at last he arrived at that very Mount Horeb where Moses had seen the burning bush, and had taken off his sandals in the presence of Jehovah.

Elijah found a cave in which to take shelter, and he knew that Jehovah had some message for him, if he would wait in perfect obedience.

A wild storm tore at the mountain and broke the rocks. Surely Jehovah was in the tempest? But Elijah knew that Jehovah was not in the wind. After the wind there came a tremendous earthquake, but Jehovah was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire; and after the fire, there came a still small voice. And it was so that when Elijah heard that mysterious voice he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance to the cave.

He soon recognised the words, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

And Elijah answered, "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, God of hosts; because the people have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

Elijah was so discouraged that he forgot that Obadiah had told him that he was already hiding a hundred prophets, and that many of the people had shouted for Jehovah even in the very presence of king Ahab.

Jehovah was not displeased with Elijah for his discouragement, but He told him that He knew of seven thousand people in the Northern Kingdom of Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal nor kissed his image.

Jehovah told Elijah that the time would come when another man must take his place as prophet, and He instructed him to find a prophet named Elisha, and anoint him as his successor. Elijah probably knew Elisha quite well; and when he returned to the land of Israel, he found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with a number of other men. Elisha was driving the twelfth team, and Elijah, coming close up to him, threw his mantle over him.

## ELIJAH ON MOUNT HOREB

Elisha turned, saw the Prophet, and knew at once that one day he was destined to take the position of the owner of the mantle.

Elisha left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me, I pray thee, go back home to kiss my father and mother farewell, and then I will follow thee."

Elijah allowed him to go, and a pair of oxen were slain and a feast was made for all the people; and afterwards Elisha went with Elijah and became his servant.

## CHAPTER 4

### NABOTH'S VINEYARD

KING AHAB had built himself a palace in Jezreel, to which he came from time to time from Samaria. Now, close to his grounds there was a beautiful vineyard, which belonged to a man named Naboth.

Naboth had taken the greatest care of his vineyard, and he valued it highly, not only because he had done so much work in it, but because it had been in his family ever since the Israelites arrived in Canaan. He was surprised and alarmed, no doubt, when he saw the king looking over into his vineyard; and when Ahab called, he bowed low, and waited respectfully to hear what he had to say.

"Give me thy vineyard," said the king, "that I may have it for a garden of herbs, to grow spices, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard, or if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money."

The king's offer was a fair one, but Naboth, though startled, was quite clear as to what he must do.

"Jehovah forbid it me," he answered, "that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

Ahab knew that Naboth was within his rights to refuse to alienate the vineyard from the family, yet he was angry and displeased at having his plans upset. On reaching the palace he flung himself down on a luxurious couch, and turned away his face, and refused to eat.

## NABOTH'S VINEYARD

As Naboth watched the king go, fear must have gripped him; for, whether right or wrong, it was dangerous to oppose this king.

Again we shall remember that Samuel had warned the people that a king might "take their fields and their vineyards and their olive-yards, even the best of them, to give to his servants." But this was almost worse, for the king was wishing to take his neighbour's vineyard for himself.

When Jezebel came in, she looked at her husband in surprise.

"Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?" she asked.

"Because," he said, "I spake unto Naboth and said unto him, 'Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it.' Yet he answered me, 'I will not give thee my vineyard!'"

"What!" she cried indignantly. "Dost thou not govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry. I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

Now, Ahab knew perfectly well that his wife meant to do something wrong, but he took care not to ask any awkward questions; for no one could blame him if he was ignorant of what she was going to do.

When Jezebel asked for the royal seal, he allowed her to use it without making any inquiry as to why she wanted it. So Jezebel was able to work out her dreadful plot. If only she could get Naboth condemned for some crime, then he would be executed and his property would fall to the king.

She wrote letters in the king's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the chief people in Jezreel. In them, she commanded that a fast should be proclaimed, and that Naboth should be brought up and accused. As there was nothing against him she ordered that two evil men should bear false witness and say that they had heard Naboth blaspheme against Jehovah and the king. Then Naboth was to be condemned, and carried forth, and stoned to death.

Alas!—the chief men in Jezreel were more afraid of Jezebel and the king than of doing wrong, so they obeyed the letters. They proclaimed a fast, as a sign that some public crime had been committed, and we can imagine that Naboth and his family, on reading such a proclamation, must have wondered who could have been



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guilty of blaspheming against the king and Jehovah. But they soon knew; for Naboth found himself dragged off to make his answer to this terrible accusation. Too well he guessed his real crime: he had refused to sell his vineyard to the king!

It was strange that the very queen who was so bent upon establishing the worth of Baal should have brought forward this accusation of blasphemy against Jehovah. But she knew that, by the law, the crime of blasphemy, or saying anything insulting against Jehovah, was punishable by death. By this very law, how guilty she herself must have been!

We can think of that crowd of people, standing round, listening to the public trial. In vain Naboth pleaded his innocence. False witnesses were brought in, who swore that they had heard him blaspheme, so that they might swear away his life. The fickle people forgot that he was a good neighbour and citizen, and, anxious to show loyalty to the king and queen, they agreed with the judgment that Naboth was guilty; and he was rushed out of the city, and stoned to death, and the dogs licked his blood.

The chief men sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth is stoned and is dead."

And it came to pass that when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, which he refused to give thee for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

Ahab took good care not to ask how Naboth had come by his death, and it pleased him to have won his way; so he went down to the vineyard to take possession of it, and to walk about in it, and to make plans for his new garden of herbs.

But Jehovah had watched and seen, and he sent Elijah with a message to the guilty king. So, just as Ahab was rejoicing in his new possession, he turned and found himself confronted by the prophet.

Ahab shrank back in consternation.

"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" he exclaimed.

"I have found thee," said Elijah sternly, "because thou hast sold thyself to work wickedness in the sight of Jehovah! Behold I will bring evil upon thee and thy house, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin.

## NABOTH'S VINEYARD

Whoso dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the fields, the fowls of the air shall eat, and the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel."

We are not told what Jezebel thought of this warning when she was told, but Ahab tore his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and humbled himself before Jehovah.

Then the word of Jehovah came to Elijah again.

"Seest thou," said Jehovah, "how Ahab humbleth himself before Me? Because he so humbleth himself, I will not bring the evil in his reign, but I will bring evil in his son's reign."

## CHAPTER 5

### A PROPHET SENT TO PRISON

KING ASA of Judah had, on the whole, served Jehovah; and when he died, his son Jehoshaphat reigned.

Jehoshaphat was a good king, and it is recorded of him that "he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah." He made peace with Ahab, and later he married his son Jehoram to Athaliah, Ahab and Jezebel's daughter. This was certainly an act which must bring later trouble down upon his family, and his friendship with Ahab did him no good.

Yet Jehoshaphat put down idol-worship in Judah, as far as he could, and he sent out teachers to teach the people from the Book of the Law, which was in the making by the patient work of writers and prophets and others.

Jehoshaphat received tribute from Arabia and from the Philistines and kept an army at Jerusalem. Ahab was glad to have such an ally, for the Syrians, though they had already been driven back by Ahab, still held the strategic town of Ramoth-gilead, to the east of Jordan. Ahab wanted this town back, and he could not be satisfied without it. So he took the chance of a visit from the king of Judah, to suggest that they should make a joint expedition against the Syrians, and recapture Ramoth-gilead.

## A PROPHET SENT TO PRISON

Jehoshaphat was placed in a difficulty at once. He wished to please his ally, but he also wished to be true to Jehovah.

"I am as thou art!" he answered readily enough. "My people are as thy people, my horses are as thy horses."

But he was in the habit of asking counsel of some prophet of Jehovah before venturing on any serious action, so he added, "Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of Jehovah to-day."

So Ahab gathered four hundred prophets together, but many of these were not true servants of God, for we shall remember that Jeroboam had gathered some of the lowest of the people to be priests for the worship of Jehovah. Ahab did not call Elijah. He was quite sure that he would receive the answer he wanted from the others.

The two kings sat on thrones, clad in their royal robes, at the entrance to the gate of Samaria, and the people were gathered together, anxious to see and to hear.

Then Ahab rose and asked of the four hundred prophets, "Shall I go up against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I not go up?"

And the prophets answered readily, "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king!"

But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied with this easy answer, and he said, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we might inquire of him?"

"There is one man," admitted Ahab, "Micaiah the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

"Let not the king say so," remonstrated Jehoshaphat.

So as Ahab needed the support of the king of Judah, he agreed to send for Micaiah.

But the four hundred prophets were not pleased at hearing this decision, and one of them, named Zedekiah, made himself a pair of horns of iron, and cried to the king, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'With these thou shalt push the Syrians until thou hast destroyed them!'"

The other prophets agreed, and cried, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper; for Jehovah hath delivered it into the king's hand."

So the war fever rose, fanned by these false flatterers.

The messenger who had gone for Micaiah gave him a friendly word of warning.

## A PROPHET SENT TO PRISON

"Behold now," he said, "the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth; let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which the king will find good."

But Micaiah was a brave servant of Jehovah, and he answered, "As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak."

So Micaiah came and stood before the kings, and Ahab spoke.

"Shall we go up against Ramoth-gilead, or shall we not go up?"

"Go and prosper!" said the prophet; "for Jehovah shall deliver it into the hands of the king!"

Ahab could see that Micaiah was only mocking him, and he answered angrily, "How often must I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of Jehovah?"

Micaiah waited a few moments, and then he spoke in a strange, solemn manner, as though he were describing some vision.

"I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have no shepherd; and Jehovah said, 'These have no master; let them return, every man to his house in peace.'"

The warning was clear enough, but Ahab turned to Jehoshaphat.

"Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?"

But Micaiah had not finished, and he cried aloud, "I saw Jehovah sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him, on His right hand and on His left. And Jehovah said, 'Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before Jehovah, and said, 'I will persuade him. I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.'"

This was Micaiah's idea of why the prophets had spoken falsely.

But the king was very angry, and ordered that Micaiah should be carried back to prison, which tells us that he was in prison when the king sent for him.

"Tell the Governor, and Joash, my son," said the king, "to feed this fellow with bread and water of affliction, until I come in peace."

And Micaiah answered boldly, "If thou return at all in peace, Jehovah hath not spoken by me!" Then he turned and shouted to the assembled people, "Hearken, O people, every one of you!"





## THE BATTLE OF RAMOTH-GILEAD

### CHAPTER 6

#### THE BATTLE OF RAMOTH-GILEAD

THE king of Syria had no intention of giving up this frontier town without making a fight for it; but he had been defeated once by King Ahab, and knew that this Israelitish king was a dangerous enemy.

Therefore he gave strict orders to his thirty-two captains, who commanded his chariots, that they must "fight with neither small nor great, but only with the king of Israel."

Personal leadership was everything in those days, and if only the king could be slain his army would melt away. Ahab knew this battle custom of aiming for the king, and on his way to Ramoth-gilead he told his ally that he intended to disguise himself and fight as a common soldier. It seemed as though the prisoner-prophet's words weighed ominously with the king.

"But put thou on thy royal robes!" added Ahab to Jehoshaphat.

The king of Judah must have begun to doubt the wisdom of his alliance with such a king; but it was now too late to draw back.

So the armies clashed, and Ahab fought as a common soldier. But the Syrians, seeking for him, noticed a royally-clothed king fighting from his decorated chariot; and, supposing him to be King Ahab they attacked him with all their forces. Jehoshaphat, finding himself in such danger, proclaimed who he was, so the enemy turned back to seek for King Ahab.

There was no need to seek for him; for a Syrian archer drew a bow at a venture, and shot an arrow between the joints of Ahab's breastplate.

"Carry me away, for I am wounded!" said Ahab to the driver of his chariot.

But it seems that Ahab endured bravely, and did not die until the evening. The blood ran out of the wound into the chariot, and the king's death ended the battle.

"Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!" so the proclamation sounded.

## THE BATTLE OF RAMOTH-GILEAD

The king's body was brought back in all honour to Samaria, where it was buried. But as they washed out the chariot in the pool of Samaria, the dogs licked the blood, as they had licked the blood of the murdered Naboth.

As for Jehoshaphat, he returned to Jerusalem, and we may be sure that he was not pleased with himself, and deeply regretted what he had done. The prophet Micaiah had been a true messenger from Jehovah.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE LAST WALK TOGETHER

ELISHA had a deep respect and a warm love for his new master, Elijah; yet one day he knew that this beloved prophet of Jehovah would leave him to his own great task. We are sure that Elisha must have learnt all he could from Elijah in the time he had with him.

One day Elisha felt a curious sense that his master was going to leave him, and when Elijah said to him, "Tarry here, I pray thee, for Jehovah hath sent me to Beth-el," Elisha answered, "A Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." Then the two passed on together from Gilgal to Beth-el.

At Beth-el they were met by a group of young men who were studying the law of Moses and seeking to be trained as prophets.

Some of them said to Elisha in private, "Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head this day?"

"Yea, I know it!" said Elisha. "Hold ye your peace."

But a little later Elijah said to his servant, "Tarry here, I pray thee, for Jehovah hath sent me to Jericho."

"As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth," said Elisha, "I will not leave thee!"

So they walked downwards into the Jordan valley, and came to Jericho.

Then the Sons of the Prophets who were at Jericho met them, and some of them said to Elisha, "Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day?"



## THE LAST WALK TOGETHER

"Yea, I know it. Hold ye your peace!" said Elisha.

But Elijah said to his servant:

"Tarry I pray thee here, for Jehovah hath sent me to Jordan."

Elisha said yet a third time, "As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

So the two men passed on, and some of the Sons of the Prophets waited to see what would happen. They saw the old and the young prophet standing by the river, and they saw that Elijah took off his mantle and folded it together and smote the waters with it, and lo, the waters divided, and the two went over on dry ground.

Elisha was more and more certain that something strange was about to happen, and at last his master broke the solemn silence.

"Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken from thee," he said.

"I pray thee," said Elisha, "let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me!"

"Thou hast asked a hard thing," came the answer; "nevertheless, if thou see me, when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so."

And it came to pass that as they went on together, talking, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which swept in between the two men and separated them, and Elijah was carried up into heaven by a whirlwind.

"My father! My father!" cried Elisha. "The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

Elisha saw his master no more, for he was standing there quite alone. Then he tore his clothes from top to bottom in his grief.

But what was that lying on the ground? It was Elijah's mantle, which had fallen from him; and Elisha, the new prophet, picked it up with great reverence and put it on. This mantle was all that remained of his beloved master and teacher.

Elisha turned and went back to the Jordan, where the waters flowed on as before. There was no ford at that spot, so he folded the prophet's mantle, and struck the water as his master had done.

"Where is the Jehovah, God of Elijah?" he exclaimed.

As though in answer to his cry, the waters divided, and Elisha passed through.

## THE LAST WALK TOGETHER

When the waiting Sons of the Prophets saw this they were filled with awe, and came and bowed themselves down to Elisha.

"The spirit of Jehovah doth rest on Elisha," they thought.

"Behold now," they said eagerly, "here be fifty of thy servants, men of strength; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master. Lest peradventure the wind of Jehovah hath taken him up, and cast him upon one of the mountains or into some valley."

"Ye shall not send," said Elisha.

But when they urged him until he was ashamed he said, "Send!"

So they sent fifty men, and searched for three days, but they could not find any trace of Elijah

And when they returned to tell Elisha of their failure he answered them quietly, "Did I not say unto you, 'Go not'?"

## CHAPTER 8

### THE WIDOW AND HER POT OF OIL

The widow of one of the Sons of the Prophets was in great distress, and she came with her sad story to Elisha.

"Thy servant, my husband, is dead," she said, "and thou knowest that thy servant did fear Jehovah; and a creditor, to whom my husband owed money, is come to take my two sons as bondmen."

And Elisha said, "Tell me, what hast thou in the house?"

"Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house save a pot of oil."

Then he said, "Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and thy two sons, and thou shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full."

So the woman went off in obedience to the prophet, and poured the oil into the vessels she had borrowed. And it came to pass when the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me yet a vessel," and he said to her, "There is not a vessel more." So the oil ceased to increase.

## THE WIDOW AND HER POT OF OIL

Then she hurried off to Elisha, and asked him what she was to do now.

"Go," he said, "sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest."

## CHAPTER 9

### SUNSTROKE IN THE HARVEST FIELD

WE shall remember how Elijah raced in front of King Ahab's chariot, along the Jezreel valley from Mount Carmel. To the north of this valley, facing south, and high up amongst the hills, there was a village named Shunem.

As Elisha passed from place to place, healing and helping and teaching the people, he came to Shunem; and an important woman, the wife of a wealthy farmer who was respected by all, invited the prophet into her house for a meal.

She did this once or twice, and was so glad and thankful to listen to his wise talk that one day she said to her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God which passeth us continually. Let us build a little chamber for him, and let us set for him a bed, a table, a stool, and a lamp, and it shall be that when he cometh to us, he shall turn in thither."

Her husband gladly agreed, and it must have been exciting to plan the little chamber, and to have it all ready when next Elisha appeared.

He arrived at last, with his servant Gehazi, and he must have been cheered to receive such kindness. For Elisha, we may be sure, was having a hard time, and it was good to have this chamber in which he could rest and pray to Jehovah, and consider how he could best help the people.

One day he told Gehazi to call the Shunammite woman, and when she stood respectfully before him he said to Gehazi, "Say to her, 'Behold thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? Wouldest thou have thy husband spoken for to the king, or the chief Captain?' "

## SUNSTROKE IN THE HARVEST FIELD

But the woman bowed and shook her head, and explained that she was quite content to dwell quietly amongst her own people.

And when the woman had left the room, Elisha looked at his servant in perplexity.

"What then is to be done for her?" he said.

"Verily she hath no child," suggested Gehazi.

So the woman was recalled, and as she stood in the doorway Elisha told her that Jehovah would give her a son.

"Do not lie unto thine handmaid!" she exclaimed

But Elisha had not lied, for by and by a little son was given to the father and mother, to their great joy. The child soon learnt to creep and then to walk, and to run about and enjoy the life of the farm. How often the mother must have thanked Elisha, and we may be sure that the boy soon found his way to the little chamber and made friends with the kind prophet. Best fun of all was to go into the harvest field and romp about amongst the reapers and the fallen corn. But the fields faced south, and the sun was intensely hot, and suddenly the child cried out to his father, "Oh, my head! My head!"

He had had sunstroke, a dangerous thing under that fierce, burning sky.

The father did not guess that anything very serious was wrong; but he told a servant to carry the child back to his mother. The mother was looking out from her door, when she noticed a young reaper carrying her child in his arms. She rushed out, and took the boy. He sat on her knees until noon, and then he died.

Her son was dead! His chatter was stilled, his bright eyes were closed. Without saying a word to any one, she carried the child to the prophet's chamber, and laid him on the bed, and, having closed the door, she went off to the harvest field.

She did not tell her husband what had happened to the child; but she asked if she might have an ass and a servant and ride off to visit Elisha.

"But why?" he asked, puzzled. "It is not a feast day, not the new moon, nor the Sabbath?"

Still she did not tell her husband, but saddled the ass and mounted; and the servant was ready to run behind and urge on the

## SUNSTROKE IN THE HARVEST FIELD

ass. So the ass was made to go at highest speed, and it was hard work, for they were going up hill towards Mount Carmel.

Now, Elisha was standing on the hill side, and as he looked far down the valley he noticed a woman on an ass, and a servant running behind.

"Behold—yonder is that Shunammite!" he said to Gehazi. "Run now, I pray thee, to meet her and say unto her, 'Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?'"

"It is well," she answered.

Her story was too sad to speak of to the servant.

But when she reached Elisha, she dismounted, and fell at his feet.

Gehazi would have pushed her away from his master, but Elisha said kindly, "Let her alone, for her soul is bitter within her, and Jehovah has not yet told me"

Then the woman poured out her anguish, sure that Elisha would understand.

"Did I desire a son of my lord?" she cried. "Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?'"

Then Elisha knew what had happened, and he said to Gehazi, "Tighten up thy belt, and take my staff, and go thy way, and if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again, and lay thy staff upon the face of the child."

But the mother, thinking that Elisha was expecting her to go off with Gehazi, exclaimed, "As Jehovah liveth, and as my soul liveth, I will not leave thee!"

So Elisha, whom we must think of as a man in the height of his strength, went along with the woman, as she rode on the ass all the way to her home

Gehazi reported that he had laid the prophet's staff on the child, but there was neither voice nor hearing, and that the child had not awaked.

So Elisha entered the chamber, and closed the door, and, kneeling, he prayed to Jehovah. And in the strength of that prayer he went up to the bed and, leaning over the child, he put his mouth upon the child's mouth and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands. Was the flesh of the child growing warm once more?

## SUNSTROKE IN THE HARVEST FIELD

Elisha paced the chamber, and we may be sure that he prayed again to Jehovah. Then he crouched over the child once more, and suddenly the child sneezed seven times and opened its eyes. Then he called Gehazi, and told him to call the woman. And when she entered the chamber, in an agony of anxiety, he said to her, "Take up thy son!"

Then the woman fell at his feet, and bowed herself, and took up her son, and went out.

This story is somewhat like the story of the child whom Elijah restored to life, and we can imagine the thanks this woman and her husband gave to Jehovah and to the prophet. We can almost see the mother giving food to her little son, and putting him into his own bed, and we may be sure that she did not tell him anything about what had happened.

## CHAPTER 10

### NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN LEPER

THIS incident is very interesting to us, for it gives us a picture of the times. Though the Syrians were constantly invading the Israelites, and both nations kept up war, they could be friendly enough when they chose.

A certain king of Syria, whose name we do not know, had a very able captain named Naaman, of whom he was very fond. But, alas, it had to be said of Naaman that he was a leper.

Leprosy is a terrible disease, and was in those days so infectious that the lepers were not allowed to live amongst ordinary people. There was no known cure, and as Naaman grew worse he would certainly have to leave his home, his wife, and the king's court.

Now, it happened that a short time before the story opens, the Syrians had been raiding Northern Israel, and had dragged off from her home a charming little girl, who had been given to Naaman's wife as a waiting-maid.

This little maid had come from near Samaria, and she had often seen Elisha, and heard of the kind and wonderful things he did

*"Would God," she exclaimed, "that my lord were with the prophet that is at Samaria."*







## NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN LEPER

through the power of Jehovah. Her parents had evidently taught her to serve Jehovah, and it was miserable enough for her to be a captive in a land where every one worshipped idols, and where no one understood her if she spoke of Jehovah; we gather that Naaman's wife was kind to her, and the little maid loved her mistress in return.

It was easy to see that her master's leprosy spoiled all happiness in that Syrian home, and the little maid, instead of being glad these Syrians who had stolen her were in trouble, could not keep back her kind thoughts as she waited on her mistress.

"Would God," she exclaimed, "that my lord were with the prophet that is at Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy!"

This startling statement was repeated to Naaman, and he repeated it to his master, the king.

Clearly the Syrian gods had not helped him to a cure. Perhaps there was a gleam of hope from Jehovah, the Israelitish God.

"Go to Samaria," said the king of Syria eagerly, "and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel."

So Naaman departed, and took with him the letter, and a tremendous gift of gold, and some beautiful clothes.

There was peace between Syria and Israel just then, and the dwellers in Samaria must have been startled at the unexpected appearance of this Syrian captain, with his chariot, his horses, and his mounted servants.

The king of Israel was alarmed and puzzled as he read the letter.

*"Behold I have sent herewith Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy."*

We see that both Naaman and the king of Syria had quite missed the point of the little maid's exclamation. She had not spoken of the king of Israel, but of the prophet in Samaria.

The king threw down the letter, rose up, and tore his clothes in despair.

"Am I God," he cried, "to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? He is merely seeking a quarrel against me, as an excuse to make war."

## NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN LEPER

The news spread through Samaria, and reached Elisha, and the prophet made haste to send the king a reassuring message.

"Wherefore has thou rent thy clothes? Let this Syrian captain come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel!"

The king was overjoyed to shift the responsibility over to Elisha, so he gave Naaman the message, and now, perhaps, Naaman remembered more clearly what the little maid had actually said.

So Naaman came with his horses and his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. All expected that the prophet would consider a visit from so great a man an honour.

But Elisha sent out his servant with a message, "Go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall be healed and thou shalt be clean."

Naaman was angry, and felt himself grossly insulted.

"Why," he exclaimed, "I thought the prophet would surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of his God, and move his hand over my sores, and I should be healed! Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Why may I not wash in them and be clean?"

He turned off in a great rage, and ordered his charioteer to drive back to Syria. But his servants had more sense than their master, and they gathered round and said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee 'Wash and be clean!'"

The captain, knowing within himself the growing terror of his disease, allowed himself to be persuaded. After all, this might be his last chance.

The chariot was turned eastward, and driven as fast as the rough road would allow. We shall see by the map that it was a long journey, and they may not have reached the Jordan until the next day.

At sight of the river, Naaman descended from his chariot, undressed, and dipped himself down in the water seven times, as the prophet had directed. At the seventh time he looked in vain for his hideous sores. They were gone, and his flesh had become soft and wholesome, as the flesh of a little child, and he knew that he was cured.

## NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN LEPER

Full of joy and gratitude, he and his company hurried back to Samaria to thank the prophet, and this time Elisha came out to meet him.

"Behold, now I know," said Naaman, "that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. Now, therefore, I pray thee, take a present from thy servant."

But Elisha shook his head and answered, "As Jehovah liveth, before Whom I stand, I will receive no present from thee!" And though Naaman urged him to take something he still refused.

Before he left Naaman made a strange request. He asked Elisha to give him as much soil belonging to the land of Israel as two mules could carry; for in those days it was supposed that each land had its own particular god or gods, and as Naaman intended to worship Jehovah of Israel, he thought it necessary to build an altar on genuine Israelitish soil.

"Thy servant," he explained to Elisha, "will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but only to Jehovah."

Then he remembered that the king of Syria, his master, bowed to his god in the house of Rimmon leaning upon his arm, and Naaman could not see how he could avoid doing his official duty.

"In this thing, Jehovah, pardon thy servant," said Naaman.

"Go in peace," said Elisha kindly.

So the chariot drove off.

But all this time Gehazi had listened in great annoyance when his master refused the present which Naaman was so ready to give.

"As Jehovah liveth," he murmured to himself, "I will run after him and take a present from him!"

Now, when Naaman turned and noticed Gehazi chasing after him, he thought, naturally, that something had gone wrong.

"Is all well?" he cried.

"All is well!" cried Gehazi. "My master has now sent me, because two young men of the Sons of the Prophets have arrived, and he would be glad of a gift of a talent of silver and two changes of garments."

Naaman was delighted to have the chance of doing something for Elisha, so he gave Gehazi the changes of garments, and twice as much money as he had asked for.

## NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN LEPER

It was some time later that Gehazi stood before his master to wait upon him, as though nothing had happened.

"Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" asked Elisha.

What was the use of Gehazi's pretending before such a master?

"Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?" he asked of his now trembling servant. "Is it a time to receive money, to receive garments and olive-yards, and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and menservants and maidservants? The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever." And Gehazi went out of Elisha's presence, a leper as white as snow.

We do not forget the faithful little maid in Syria, and though the Bible tells us nothing more, we may think out the rest of the story for ourselves.

We can watch her as she stood, excitedly seeing her master set out on his journey into her beloved homeland. How homesick she must have felt! Then, as the days passed, her heart might begin to doubt. Suppose she had made a mistake? Suppose her master returned as leprous as before? What punishment would they give her?

If the little maid had such thoughts, we are sure that she prayed earnestly to Jehovah to heal her master; and, indeed, it was this little maid's faith that really saved him.

Then, at last, there are the cries in the street—the master is returning, and all is well!

We hope that as a reward they sent her back to her beloved land, and that once again she saw the kind prophet and kneeled before him for his blessing.

## CHAPTER II

### ELISHA AND THE SYRIANS

We do not know when the following incident happened, but it was at a time when the Syrians were warring against Israel.

When the king of Syria made his plans, and arranged for taking

## ELISHA AND THE SYRIANS

the Israelites by surprise, he found over and over again that the Israelites knew all about it. So he was much troubled and called his servants, thinking that there must be some traitor amongst them.

"Will ye show me," he said, "which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"

A servant answered, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha the prophet telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber."

"Go and spy out where he is," said the king, "that I may send and fetch him."

"He is in Dothan," said a servant.

We remember that Dothan was the spot where Joseph went to find his brothers, and was put down into the pit. It was far from Syria, and shows how far the Syrians had penetrated into Israel, for Dothan was only about twelve miles from Samaria. The king of Syria despatched a great host, and surrounded Dothan at night.

When Elisha and his servant rose early in the morning, and saw the Syrians all round the town, the servant exclaimed, "Alas, my master, how shall we do?"

But Elisha said calmly, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Then Elisha prayed that Jehovah would open his servant's eyes; the servant saw with astonishment that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire, round about Elisha.

As the Syrians advanced to capture Elisha, the prophet asked Jehovah to smite the whole company with blindness. This came about, and Elisha said to the blinded men, "This is not the way, neither is this the city. Come ye after me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek."

So Elisha acted as their guide, and when in the end Jehovah opened their eyes, the Syrians found that they were in Samaria.

"My father, shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?" asked the king of Israel eagerly.

But Elisha scorned such a proposal.

"Wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast not taken?" he asked. "Set bread and water before them that they may eat and drink, and go to their master."

## ELISHA AND THE SYRIANS

That was a strange feast, for the king of Israel made great provision for them all. They became so friendly that when they returned to their master, and told him what had happened, the Syrian king left off sending his armed bands into the land of Israel for some time—not for long, however, as we shall see in our next story.

### CHAPTER 12

#### THE FAMINE IN SAMARIA

ON a certain occasion, the date of which we do not know, the Syrians were again carrying war into the land of Israel, and had surrounded the city of Samaria, with such effect that none could go out for food, and no food could be brought in.

All provisions grew scarcer and scarcer, until at last the wretched people were eating horses, asses, and anything they could find, and paying huge sums for food.

From the king downwards there was great distress, and the king was convinced that Elisha the prophet was at the bottom of the trouble. Why he thought so, we are not sure.

The king, wearing sackcloth under his royal robes, as a sign of grief, made search for Elisha, for he said, "God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day."

Now, Elisha was in his house, with some of the elders of Israel, when the news arrived that the king was seeking him.

Apparently Elisha had been persuading the famished people to hold out against the Syrians, but now the king cried threateningly:

"Behold this evil is from Jehovah! Why should I wait for the help of Jehovah any longer?"

The prophet answered quietly:

"Hear ye the word of Jehovah. To-morrow, about this time, a measure of fine flour will be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for the same price in the gate of Samaria."

## THE FAMINE IN SAMARIA

But the officer upon whose arm the king was leaning, broke out into mocking laughter.

"Behold, if Jehovah would make windows in heaven, might this thing be!"

Elisha answered sternly, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof!"

Now, there were four lepers sitting miserably at the entering in of the gate of Samaria. They were not allowed inside the city, in case they infected others with their dreadful disease.

As they talked to one another, they said, "Why sit we here until we die? If we say 'We will enter into the city,' then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, and let us go to the camp of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live, and if they kill us, we shall but die."

So when the sun sank, and twilight had covered the land, they rose up and made their way down to the camp of the Syrians. But when they arrived at the outskirts of the camp, behold there was no man there. For Jehovah had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots and horses, even the noise of a great host, and they had said to one another, "Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us."

So the Syrians rose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, their horses, and their asses, even all the camp as it was, and fled for their lives.

The lepers therefore found the camp deserted and silent, except for the horses, the mules, and the asses. They were amazed, indeed, and they entered into one tent and did eat and drink, and carried from the tent silver and gold and raiment, which they hid in the ground. Then they went into another tent, and did just the same.

But as the lepers were thus enriching themselves, they began to think more carefully.

"We do not well!" they said to one another. "This day is a day of good tidings, yet we hold our peace; if we tarry till the morning light, some punishment will surely fall upon us. Now, therefore, let us return to the city, and tell the king's household."

## THE FAMINE IN SAMARIA

So they went back to the city, and called up the porter at the gate, and it was now night and very dark.

The porter shouted to know what they wanted, and they shouted back, "We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied and asses tied, and the tents left as they were!"

The porters rushed off to tell the king, and he rose up in the night and said to his servants, "I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry, therefore they are gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When they come out of their city, we shall catch them alive and get into the city.'"

Then one of the servants suggested that they should send out men on two of the remaining horses, and find out the truth.

"Go and see!" commanded the king.

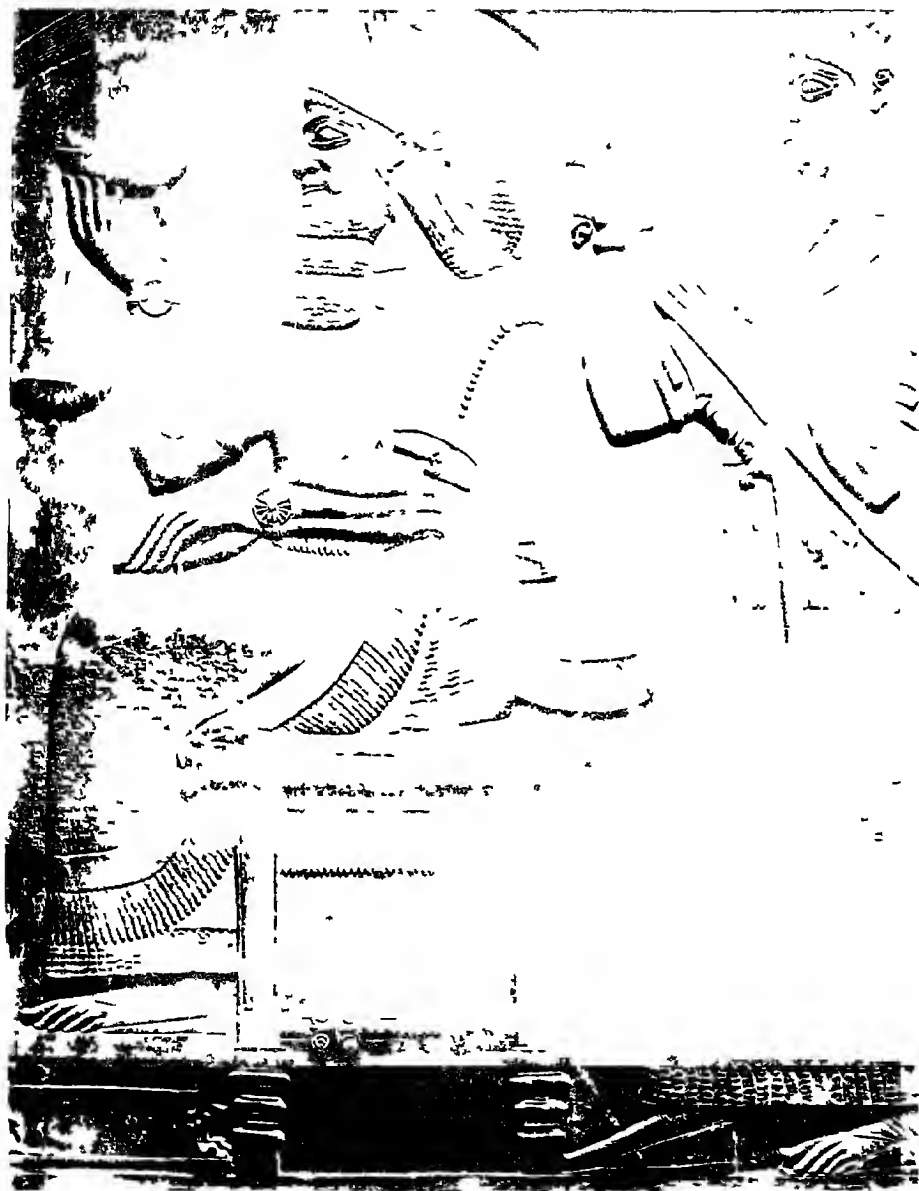
So, as the morning broke, they followed as far as the Jordan, and found all the way full of garments and vessels which the Syrians had cast away in their haste.

Then the messengers returned and told the king. So the people rushed out of the city, and made for the camp, and carried off all that they could find from the tents.

We shall remember that Elisha had prophesied that food would once more be cheap. And so it was, as the people stampeded to buy, the mocking officer, who had scorned Elisha, was knocked down in the crowd and was killed.



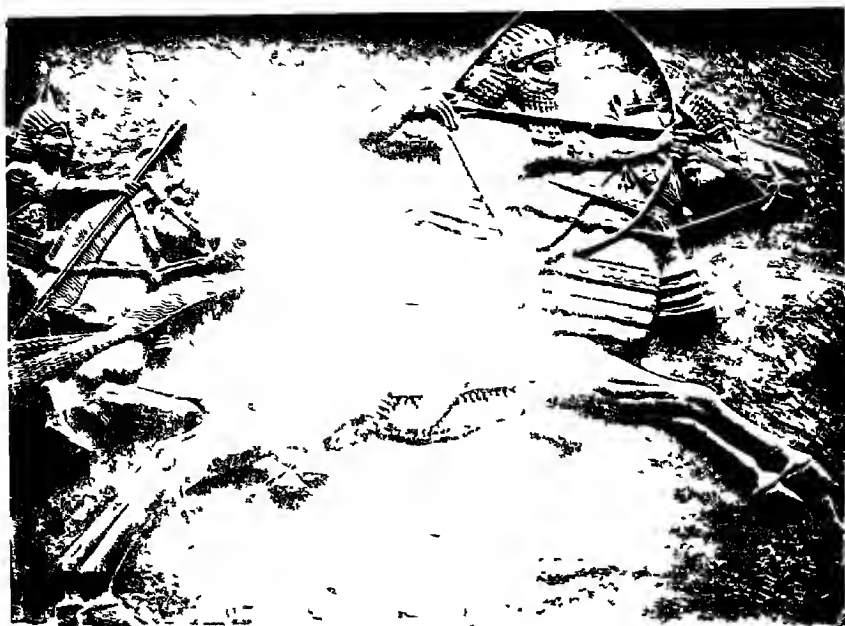




"They wore long fringed robes, with long hair and beards, closely curled and plaited, and sandals"—an Assyrian king at a feast.

"We can see Tiglath-pileser himself in his two-wheeled chariot."





"In the British Museum there are magnificent pictures of lion-hunting."





## CHAPTER I

### JHOSHAPHAT THE BOY KING

**W**E will now spend a little while in the south, in the Kingdom of Judah. We shall remember King Jehoshaphat, who was nearly killed in the battle of Ramoth-gilcad, and how his son had married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. This son was now dead, and so was his son Ahaziah, so only Ahaziah's young children were left as descendants of David, through Solomon and Rehoboam.

Athaliah was therefore the grandmother of the children, the eldest of which would have the right to be king. But, alas!—Athaliah was as desperately eager on behalf of the worship of Baal as her mother Jezebel had been. She had a passion to establish the religion of Baal right in the heart of Jerusalem, as her mother had tried to establish it in Samaria.

Here was her great chance. Why should she not be the Queen of Judah, and rule the Kingdom of Judah in her own right, and set up what religion she chose?

But what of the royal princes?

Athaliah was a cruel and ruthless woman, and she decided that all the grandchildren must be murdered. The horror of murdering these innocent royal children did not seem to trouble the wicked queen; but it did trouble the children's aunt, Jehosheba, who was their father's sister or half-sister.

## JEHOASH THE BOY KING

Jehosheba had married the High Priest of the Temple, whose name was Jehoiada. He was one of the finest men we read of during this dreadful time. He was passionately set upon keeping up the worship of Jehovah at the Temple, and upon keeping the throne of David to the royal line.

Jehosheba determined to do what she could. So when the poor little princes and princesses were being murdered, she managed to snatch up the baby, and carry him off with his nurse to safety with her husband, who lived in one of the sets of chambers built round the Temple. She managed so cleverly that Athaliah had no idea that a royal prince had been saved.

Athaliah took her place as reigning queen, and, being very powerful, many rallied around her, and the rest were too much afraid of her to resist. She established the Baal worship, and actually took away some of the Temple treasures, and placed them in the House of Baal.

We can imagine how difficult it was to hide a boy for six years in the Temple chambers; but the great secret was kept, and the good Jehoiada took the greatest pains to instruct the boy about Jehovah and His law, and to explain how He wished the descendants of Abraham to be a nation of good men and women. At last the wickedness of Athaliah became so terrible that Jehoiada knew that the only hope for the nation was to place the young prince on the throne.

It is good to know that the best men and women in Judah were greatly distressed at the disloyalty to Jehovah, and at the way the kingdom was being governed, and when Jehoiada despatched secretly faithful men up and down the land, he found that he had many keen supporters.

The Levites, had no special land of their own as a tribe, but were scattered in special towns, and Jehoiada managed to get an extra number of these Levites to Jerusalem.

Jehoash was now seven years old, which meant that he was as old in his ways as a boy of ten or twelve to-day. Round about the Temple there were halls and pillared terraces, and chambers where the priests lived, and store rooms and treasure rooms. A Temple Guard was on the watch day and night. So when the priest had made his plans, he called a secret gathering of the captains and

## JEHOASH THE BOY KING

soldiers of the Temple, who may have been Athaliah's men, and supplied them with weapons, spears, and shields, which had been stored away by David.

And then Jehoiada brought forth Jehoash, and placed a crown on his head, and anointed him king, and gave him a copy of the Holy Law.

The guards who surrounded him clapped their hands and shouted, "God save the king!" "Let the king live!" So the cry was taken up, as the news of what had happened swept out into the narrow streets.

And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the Temple Court. And there was the new boy king standing by a pillar, with the crown upon his head, and all the people were wild with joy, and the trumpeters were blaring their trumpets in honour of the new reign that had begun.

This boy was her own grandson, the baby whom she had thought she had killed nearly seven years ago. Yet there he was, bowing and smiling on the people in answer to their cheerings. Athaliah knew only too well what all this meant. Jehoiada, the hated Priest of Jehovah, with his priests and Levites, had won over the Temple Guard, and Baal and his priests had fallen, as they had fallen on Mount Carmel in the days of her father.

She was a brave woman as she stood before them all, and rent her clothes, and shouted "Treason! Treason!" But the treason against the Throne of David had taken place when she killed the innocent grandchildren so long ago.

Then Jehoiada commanded that the queen be driven forth out of the Temple, and he threatened death to any one who followed her.

Jehoiada made a covenant or compact between Jehovah, the king, and the people, that they should be Jehovah's people, and between the young king and the people, that he should be true to them.

In the excitement that followed they rushed to the house of Baal, and wrecked it, together with the images, and the altars, and they slew the Priest of Baal also.

Queen Athaliah was killed as she escaped, and a procession was

## JEHOASH THE BOY KING

formed, and the king was taken from the Temple to the royal palace and set upon the throne, and his uncle Jehoiada was his guardian and the Regent for the kingdom.

### CHAPTER 2

#### JEHOASH AS A MAN

WE are told that Jehosh did what was right in the sight of Jehovah all the days of Jehoiada the priest. And we get a vivid picture of one of the right things that the young king and his uncle arranged together.

It was now over a hundred years since the Temple had fallen into bad repair. It was a sadly different Temple from what it had been in the days of Solomon, for treasures had been sent off to Egypt and to Syria, and Athaliah had robbed it for the House of Baal.

But, worse still, the people had not been sending in their regular contributions towards the expenses of keeping the place in order, and necessary repairs could not be made without money. So the young king had a chest made, and they set it outside the gate of the Temple, and they made a proclamation that the people should bring their collections to it, as they had brought gifts to Moses in the Wilderness.

The princes and people were pleased to obey, and they filled the chest day by day, until there was plenty of money to pay the masons and carpenters, the iron and brass-workers; and with the rest of the money they made gold and silver vessels, and they offered burnt offerings to Jehovah continually, all the days of Jehoiada.

When Jehoiada, the fine old priest, died, he was buried as a prince, for he was given a sepulchre in Jerusalem amongst the kings. "Because," they said, "he has done good in Israel, both towards God, and towards His house."

But now a sad change came over the king. Certain princes, who had been at heart worshippers of Baal, saw their chance of

## JEHOASH AS A MAN

getting hold of Jehoash. They urged him to leave the God of his fathers and to follow Baal and worship him. It is difficult for us to believe that Jehoash, after all his long training with Jehoiada, could have been so weak; but so it was. Jehovah sent prophets to warn Jehoash and the princes of the evil that must come, but they would not listen.

Then it was that the spirit of Jehovah came upon Jehoiada's son. He was the king's cousin, and his name was Zechariah. He stood out boldly before these people who had once shouted for Jehovah and were now shouting for Baal.

"Why transgress ye the commandment of Jehovah that ye cannot prosper?" he cried. "Because ye have forsaken Jehovah, He hath also forsaken you!"

But the people conspired against the brave prophet, and Jehoash gave them orders to slay Zechariah, and he was stoned to death for having given the warning which turned out to be so true.

Great trouble followed this wicked action. The Syrians invaded Jerusalem, and destroyed the princes, and masses of plunder were sent off to Damascus. As for Jehoash, he lost the love of his people, and was murdered by his own servants, and the nation refused to allow him to be buried in the sepulchres of the kings.

## CHAPTER 3

### AMOS, THE HERDSMAN OF TEKOA.

IN the Kingdom of Judah, about six miles south of Bethlehem, there lived a very wise herdsman. He was filled with faithfulness to Jehovah, and he had a keen eye and a critical mind to learn the truth of what was going on around him. He liked to notice how ordinary people behaved to one another, and whether they were kind and fair, and whether the rulers and judges followed out the wise directions left them by Moses.

Amos was an owner of cattle, and was used to working amongst the stock and on the land, and was not one of the Sons of the Prophets who had been educated at Beth-el or Jericho. He must



## AMOS, THE HERDSMAN OF TEKOA

have been surprised indeed when Jehovah told him to leave his herds for others to take care of, so that he might pass through his own land of Judah, and take a message of warning to the king of Israel, his prophets and his people.

But the moment Amos understood what Jehovah wished him to do, he obeyed, and set out on his journey, not knowing what might happen to him.

Before we follow Amos, let us take a look at what had been happening in the Northern Kingdom. King after king had followed one another, all of them doing evil in the sight of Jehovah. Some of them were men of ability, and Samaria had grown in riches and power; but the history is a history of quarrel and battle, of massacre and murder.

Jezebel was murdered by orders of a strong young king named Jehu, as were all the household of Ahab. In the days of his grandson, Joash, Elisha the prophet died.

At last we come to Jeroboam II., who was the son of Joash, whom we must not confuse with Jehoash king of Judah. Jeroboam II. was an able king, but he did not follow Jehovah, and it was in his reign that this strange herdsman from near Bethlehem arrived. As was the manner of the prophets, he began to proclaim his message, and the crowds gathered round him with eager interest.

At first the people were pleased enough at the fierce things which Amos spoke, for his words were all in condemnation of the wickedness of the peoples of Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, and Moab. It was very satisfactory to hear woe pronounced against these people, whom they looked upon as their enemies. But presently the people in the crowd were puzzled. Some became very angry, and the poor were filled with surprise.

Amos was boldly threatening punishment from Jehovah on the land of Israel; and when he described the wrongs of which they were guilty, they knew it was all true. The rich had trampled down the poor like the dust; they had filled their grand houses with beautiful things by robbery and violence. They lived in luxury, and reclined on silken cushions, and ornamented their houses with ivory. Worse than that, there was no true justice in the land. The judges at the gate of the city took bribes, and there

## AMOS, THE HERDSMAN OF TEKOA

was no chance for a poor man to win his case against a rich man. They browbeat the honest man, and cheated the poor man.

Amos illustrated his message by saying that Jehovah had held out a plumbline to test his people, as to whether they were straight and upright—as a mason holds up a line with a lead weight at the end of it, to test whether a wall is straight.

Jehovah had found Israel as crooked as a badly built wall, which must sooner or later fall.

“Woe to them that trust in the mountain of Samaria!” cried Amos. “Ye eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall. Ye chant to the sound of the viol, you drink wine in bowls, and anoint yourselves with precious ointments, but ye are not sorry for the poor. So I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

The herdsman's words were filling the people with excitement. The poor knew only too well how the rich treated them, and the rich hated to hear their greediness and selfishness proclaimed.

Now, Amaziah, the priest for the Golden Calf at Beth-el, was very agitated, and he sent word to King Jeroboam.

“Amos has conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words! Moreover, he saith that Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be led away captive out of their own land.”

We do not know what the king said, but Amaziah returned to Amos and spoke angrily:

“O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and carry thy prophesying there. But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el, for it is the king's sanctuary, and the house of the kingdom.”

But Amos answered, “I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of wild figs. Jehovah took me as I followed the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, ‘Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.’”

We shall notice that Jehovah always sent warnings to His people when they had sinned, and here He still calls Israel “My people Israel,” as though He still loved them.

In another part of the Bible we read that Jehovah said:

## AMOS, THE HERDSMAN OF TEKOA

"I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, and ye answered not."

Did the warnings of this simple herdsman come true?

Within the next forty years or so there were five kings of Israel, one of whom reigned a month, and another six months, and for a few years there was no king at all.

Hoshea, the last king of Israel, reigned for nine years; and then the time came when the Kingdom of Israel went down as a nation for ever.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ASSYRIAN CONQUERORS

LET us take a good look at the map.

To the north-east and east of the land of Canaan, the great empires of Babylon and Assyria, which we must not confuse with Syria, struggled against one another for domination, while Egypt, to the south, was still ambitious for world power. These three peoples were like great lions, watching one another, and tearing at one another's throats. Sometimes one was on top, and sometimes another.

Canaan was important to all these empires, especially in the north, for the trading routes between the east and the growing west lay through Canaan. As the Assyrians pressed westward, they found the land of Israel so torn by insurrection and rival kings that it was no match for any organised invasion.

During the reign of a king named Pekah, the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser, made a serious raid into the country, and carried off some of the unfortunate people into captivity. It was twenty years after this that Hoshea, the last king, came to the throne.

The Assyrians were a very warlike race, and we can see many pictures of them as carved in stone. They wore long fringed robes, with long hair and beards, closely curled and plaited, and sandals. These stone pictures show them at war, at the top of their siege towers, which they drew close up to the walls of a city so that they might shower down their arrows.

## THE ASSYRIAN CONQUERORS

In the British Museum there are magnificent pictures of lion-hunting, of musicians playing, of oil being poured over the sacred bull. We can see the poor prisoners falling prostrate before their conquerors, and lines of tribute, in procession, with camels, asses and lions. We can see Tiglath-pileser himself in his two-wheeled chariot, and the whole drama of a siege, with the battering ram rushed up a mound to make a breach in the walls, of men shooting from behind screens, and the bodies of slaughtered captives, and even women and children coming behind the roped captives.

Now, Hoshea had won the throne by heading an insurrection and slaughtering Pekah and his supporters. At that time, Shalmaneser, the reigning king of Assyria, was determined to keep control of the seaboard province of Israel, and he forced Hoshea to acknowledge him as overlord, and to send him a yearly tribute. This tribute was a humiliating burden to Hoshea, and he suddenly stopped sending it. When the king of Assyria found that Hoshea was playing him false, he had him arrested and thrown into prison. But though the king was gone, the people of Israel made a terrific fight to keep their country free.

Shalmaneser came in all his might to conquer Samaria, and when we read that the city was besieged for three years before the people gave in, we can understand, by what happened in Elisha's day, what that meant in misery and endurance.

Shalmaneser lost his throne during the siege, and it was his successor, Sargon, who finally overthrew the Kingdom of Israel.

The warnings of the prophets must have come back to the remembrance of the wretched citizens, when at last Samaria opened her gates to the enemy, as a sign that the struggle was over.

The Assyrians had contrived a scheme for subduing the obstinate nations which they wished to put under their rule. They carried off whole populations, and planted them far away from their homeland, to live as best they might amongst foreigners. Such a calamity was overwhelming, and when the Kingdom of Israel learned that deportation was its fate, despair seized upon all the people, whether the very rich or the very poor.

## THE ASSYRIAN CONQUERORS

Already some of the northern tribes had been carried off, and now the woe was falling upon the whole nation. These proud people, the noblest and the strongest of them, the poorest and the youngest, were taken from their homes, their gardens, vineyards and olive-yards, their fields, cattle, sheep, camels, asses, and the dearly beloved flowers of the countryside.

It is quite impossible for us to imagine their distress, as they were taken across the Jordan, never to return. The king of Assyria was too clever to plant them down in one place. Had he done so, they might have united and rebelled. So he separated them off into groups, and sent them far away from one another into different cities and districts.

The national history of the Kingdom of Israel, set up by Jeroboam I., was now at an end, and we hear no more of the Northern Kingdom.

The final fate of the "Lost Tribes," as they are usually called, is still one of the mysteries about which learned men argue. But from now onwards, the Bible follows the story of the Kingdom of Judah, whose capital was Jerusalem. It is these people who became known to the world as the Jews.





## CHAPTER I

### JONAH'S MISSION

**T**HE book of Jonah is a great missionary story. It was written by some one who is quite unknown to history, and who probably lived about two hundred years later than the fall of Samaria. But as the story is about a prophet who lived in Judah before the fall of the Assyrian Empire, we will take it before we follow further into the story of the Kingdom of Judah.

The writer knew that Jews scorned the heathen, and especially their enemies, and believed that their own God Jehovah could not possibly take pity upon such. The lesson which this story of Jonah teaches is clearly against such a poor and narrow idea of the God who was to proclaim Himself as the "Everlasting Father."

Jonah the Prophet was living in the land of Judah, amongst people who had a horror of the mighty Assyrian Empire, because these Assyrians had taken most of the northern tribes into cap-

## JONAH'S MISSION

tivity, and there was every reason to expect that they would one day descend upon Judah, and try to do the same.

Jonah must also have feared the Assyrians, or considered them to be quite outside the range of Jehovah's thought and care. He was therefore amazed indeed when Jehovah commanded him to set forth on a long and dangerous journey to Nineveh, the capital of the dreaded Assyrian race.

"Arise," said Jehovah, "and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me."

This was a dangerous and terrifying command to receive. How could a foreigner, and he of the Kingdom of Judah, appear in a heathen city, and take upon himself to cry out against it?

So, instead of going eastward, Jonah hurried westward, and made for the sea coast, and arrived at Joppa, the trading port. Jonah decided that he would make for Tarshish. No one knows where Tarshish was, but it was probably one of the Phœnician colonies in Spain, almost the end of the known world. His plan went well, for a trading vessel was, very conveniently, starting out on the dangerous voyage to Tarshish—at that time, all sea voyages were very risky.

Jonah paid his fare to the shipmaster, and congratulated himself on his success. All was now well. Once on board and sailing off on the high sea, he could not possibly obey Jehovah. He had thought of an excellent plan for escaping from the presence of Jehovah.

We may smile at Jonah's folly, and remember some lines of one of our most beautiful psalms:

"Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I fly from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there, and if I make my bed in hell" (which means Sheol, the place of the dead) "Thou art there!"

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand hold me.

"If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me!' even the night shall be light about me. The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee."

Jonah, in his wilfulness, had to find all this out for himself,

## JONAH'S MISSION

and as soon as the ship had weighed anchor and all seemed well, he went below and fell fast asleep.

But presently Jehovah "hurled" a terrific wind upon the sea, which caught the ship, so that it seemed as though it must be broken in pieces. The sailors were in great terror, and each man, according to his nationality, called upon his national god to deliver him. In order to lighten the ship and give her a chance, they proceeded to throw the cargo overboard into the sea.

Jonah, however, slept on, until roused by the shipmaster.

"What meanest thou, O sleeper?" he exclaimed. "Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that thy God will think upon us, that we perish not."

The sailors, being superstitious, said one to another: "Come, and let us cast lots; that we know for whose cause this evil is upon us."

For the storm was increasing in power, and the sailors were sure that some man on board had offended his god and made him angry. So they drew lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah, the only passenger we hear of.

"Tell us, we pray thee, for what cause is this evil come upon us?" they cried. "What is thine occupation? Whence comest thou? Of what people art thou?"

"I am a Hebrew," said Jonah, "and I fear Jehovah, the God of Heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land."

Then the sailors were still more terrified, for they had heard of the strange and mighty God of the Hebrews.

"What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm for us?" they asked, for the storm gave no sign of abating.

How could Jonah make clear to these heathen sailors why he was seeking to escape from his God? There was only one fair thing he could now do, and Jonah showed his courage by saying quietly, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you."

At first the kindly sailors refused to do as Jonah asked, and they took to their oars, and "digged them" into the water. But all efforts were in vain; it was clear that the ship must go down unless they sacrificed Jonah.



## JONAH'S MISSION

"We beseech thee, O Jehovah," they cried to Jonah's God, "let us not perish for taking this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood. It is Thou, O Jehovah, Who hast done as it pleased Thee." So they took up Jonah and cast him into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging.

The sailors began to fear Jehovah greatly, and they offered a sacrifice in the ship, and made vows to serve Jonah's God.

But what happened to Jonah ?

This is the strange part of the story which no one quite understands. We are told that Jehovah prepared a "great fish" (not a whale, as it is sometimes called) to swallow Jonah, and he was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. We do not know of any "fish" that could have swallowed a man and kept him alive inside him, but we have no reason to doubt that something very wonderful and mysterious happened to this deserter-prophet.

The expression, "three days and three nights," is a Hebrew expression which means any short space of time.

In the end, Jehovah spoke to the "fish" and it threw Jonah up on dry land, and he found himself back in Judah, as though he had never tried to fly to Taishish.

## CHAPTER 2

### JONAH'S SECOND CHANCE

So Jehovah spoke to Jonah a second time and said, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

Jonah was obedient this time, and he set out for Nineveh, and if he walked the journey would take him about four months. We do not know what Jonah thought would happen to him in the end; but if he expected to be torn in pieces by the angry Assyrians, he was now bravely ready for such a fate.

Nineveh, as excavators have found, lay for two and a half miles on the left bank of the Tigris, and, on reaching the city,

## JONAH'S SECOND CHANCE

this stranger from the Kingdom of Judah began to cry aloud a strange and alarming message:

"Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

But to Jonah's astonishment, the people, instead of being furious with him, believed his message. They proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. News of this mysterious warning reached the king, and he rose from his throne and laid aside his royal robes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. He immediately issued a proclamation:

"Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed nor drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let men cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will repent and turn away from his fierce anger, and we perish not?"

So Jehovah, looking down upon Nineveh, saw that the king and the people had given up their evil ways. It was now right for him to spare them the suffering He had threatened.

But when Jonah realised that Jehovah was not going to carry out the threat, and that Nineveh was not to be destroyed in forty days, he felt himself greatly aggrieved; he was, in fact, very angry. He was so angry that he asked Jehovah to take away his life.

By the prayer he offered, we can see that he had felt pretty sure all the time that Jehovah would be gracious and forgiving.

"O Jehovah!" he cried; "did I not dread this from the first? Was not this why I fled to Tarshish? For I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful and slow to anger."

"Dost thou well to be angry?" asked Jehovah.

But Jonah did not answer. He went out of the city, and sat on the east side of it, and made himself a booth for shelter, and waited to see what would happen to Nineveh. The heat was growing terrific, and Jehovah made a gourd or wild vine to spring up to give more shelter to the angry prophet. But Jonah remained angry, and by and by Jehovah sent an insect to injure the gourd, so that it withered and died.

Jonah was distressed at the loss of the gourd, and was still angry. Then Jehovah prepared a wind, hot and sultry, and the

## JONAH'S SECOND CHANCE

sun beat down upon Jonah's head, so that he fainted, and again he implored Jehovah to allow him to die.

"Dost thou well to be angry about the withering of the gourd ?" asked Jehovah.

"I do well to be angry, even to the death!" answered Jonah.

"Thou hast had pity on the gourd!" said Jehovah; "for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it to grow; which came up in a night and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, with over a hundred and twenty thousand young children within it, who know not their right hand from their left; and also much cattle ?"

Here the writer of the story breaks off sharply, and we are sorry not to know what answer Jonah made.

It is important for us to notice this story very particularly, as it shows that the thought was growing in men's minds that Jehovah was not just a national God of one particular nation, but was a God who was taking thought of the world outside, even for a wicked city like Nineveh.









## CHAPTER I

### HEZEKIAH'S REFORMATION

**T**HERE had been good kings and bad kings in Judah during the one hundred and twenty years which had passed since the death of Jehoash, and the nation had swayed between the worship of Jehovah and the worship of idols, in a way which will seem to us to be quite amazing. Sometimes Judah was in alliance with Israel, and sometimes at daggers drawn.

When there came to the throne a young prince named Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, one of the evil kings of Judah, great fear of the Assyrians was in many a heart. Already, in the northern kingdom, the Assyrians had carried off a number of the people from round about Galilee, and it seemed to be only a question of time before they would turn their attention to Judah.

Hezekiah began to reign about three years before the Assyrians besieged Samaria for the last time, before carrying off the inhabi-

## HEZEKIAH'S REFORMATION

tants to the far-away eastern lands, so we must go back in our story to tell of what was happening in Judah at that time.

Hezekiah found Jerusalem, and the Temple and the kingdom generally, in a wretched state. His father had been a bold worshipper of false gods, and he had had the doors of the Temple locked, and had set up altars to idols in the streets of Jerusalem.

Ahaz had argued like this.

"Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, so that they may help me."

But the chronicler adds, "But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel."

Hezekiah was twenty-five when he began to reign, and he decided to make a complete change without any delay. He at once opened the doors of the Temple and repaired them, and brought the priests and the Levites together. Almost before the people had time to realise what was happening, they found the Temple doors open, and the Temple, which had sunk to a dirty condition, being cleaned out. The altars to the false gods disappeared from the streets, and the sacrifices to Jehovah began again, and beautiful singing of sacred songs and psalms could be heard once more from the Temple Courts.

There was a great public consecration of the Temple, and both the king and the people were full of joy. For there must have been many men and women who had mourned over the neglect of the Jehovah worship, who had, if only in secret, been true to Jehovah. It was indeed all very surprising, for we are told that "the thing was done suddenly."

But now a great thought came to Hezekiah. Why should he not send out an invitation to all Israel, whether living in the South or the North, to come together to celebrate the Passover Feast, which had not been celebrated nationally since the days of Solomon?

The Passover was the Feast held to keep in remembrance that night of nights when the Children of Israel ate their last meal in Egypt, standing ready for their journey. It was the most sacred Feast established by Moses, in which the whole nation ought to have joined. It was the Feast that Jesus celebrated, nearly eight hundred years later, when on the night of the "Last Supper" He "ate the Passover with His disciples."

## HEZEKIAH'S REFORMATION

We must remember that the Northern Kingdom was being threatened by Assyria, and they were expecting that Samaria might be besieged any time during the next year or two.

Hezekiah sent out messengers on foot and on mules, from Dan in the North to Beer-sheba in the South. He left no one out. His longing was that all the twelve tribes should once again join in a great worshipping Feast to Jehovah. Let them forget that they were two separate kingdoms, let them try what being united would do to bring peace and happiness.

So Hezekiah gave the Kingdom of Israel a great chance to return to Jehovah and his worship. The message he sent out was a very beautiful one, and it is most likely that the prophet Isaiah helped the king to write it.

"Ye children of Israel, turn again to Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria; And be not like unto your fathers, but yield yourselves unto Jehovah and enter into His sanctuary, and serve Jehovah your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you.

"For if ye turn again unto Jehovah, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they may come again into this land; for Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face away from you, if ye return unto Him "

And now let us read what happened to this appeal:

"So the posts passed from city to city, through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun; and they laughed them to scorn and mocked them

"Nevertheless, some of the people of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem

"Also in Judah, the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and the princes. And there assembled at Jerusalem a very great congregation."

The Feast lasted not only for seven days, but for fourteen days, for there had not been such joy in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon; and the priests and the Levites blessed the people, and their prayers came up to God's holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.



## HEZEKIAH'S REFORMATION

So the heathen altars were broken down and thrown into the brook Kidron, and Hezekiah ordered the Serpent of Brass, which Moses had made in the Wilderness to be destroyed, for the people worshipped it and burnt incense to it.

Hezekiah was helped greatly by having the support of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah is one of the great prophets of those days, and in the "Book of Isaiah," of which he himself wrote a good deal, though not all of it, we can pick out pictures of the days of Hezekiah, and notice the beautiful thoughts of the prophet, as he unfolded his idea of Jehovah

Let us glance at a few of them, and then we shall understand better the man who helped Hezekiah when his great testing time came against the Assyrians.

"Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know. My people doth not consider. They have forsaken Jehovah, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel into anger; they are gone away backward.

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek judgment, do justice to the oppressed: judge the fatherless; plead for the widow.

"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land, but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

"Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem, and Jehovah shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into scythes, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

"O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah."

## WATER FOR JERUSALEM

### CHAPTER 2

#### WATER FOR JERUSALEM

THE mighty Assyrians, who had now broken down the Northern Kingdom and carried masses of the people into captivity, were watching the Kingdom of Judah with a keen eye. Jerusalem was a great fortress, which they coveted, for it controlled a wide area, and it was tiresome to them to have this little nation on the borders of Egypt standing out against them and blocking the road to the sea.

Hezekiah had seen the Northern Kingdom go down, and this tragedy must have filled him and his subjects with alarm. He had the walls of Jerusalem repaired, and he tried to diminish the water-supply in the country round about; for, said he, "Why should the kings of Assyria find much water?"

One of his great engineering works was to make a conduit to bring water from a spring outside into the city, where the water filled the pool of Siloam. This is very interesting to us, for about 1880 this very conduit was excavated, and an inscription was found which is of great value. Let us read what Dr. Fosdick tells us in his *Pilgrimage to Palestine*.

"Why leave the fountain of Gihon for Sennacherib to drink?" thought Hezekiah. Hezekiah therefore dug one of the most interesting emergency tunnels known to history. He carried the fountain of Gihon 1750 feet through the solid rock of Ophel; he brought it out upon the other side, into the broad pool of Siloam within the city's walls, and he covered the outer entrance to the spring, so that the Assyrians could not find it. . . .

"We started from the inner end at the pool of Siloam, and waded through to Gihon. Every step of the tunnel bears evidence that it was indeed dug in an emergency. The work is rough and uneven, the walls rudely shaped, and the tunnel of an unequal width and height. At times there was ample space above our heads; at times we crouched with our faces almost in the water. . . . That the boring was done from both ends is evident; one can see plainly still the rough uneven juncture, where the workmen

## WATER FOR JERUSALEM

brought their two shafts together, not troubling to disguise the unequal levels of their walls and ceiling. Perhaps that very day Sennacherib was coming up to thunder at their gates.

"Forty-five years before we went, a group of adventurous boys had been the first to explore the tunnel, and another lot of boys had found one of the most notable inscriptions yet found, cut into the rock.

"Here is a translation of what was really written at the time:

" ' While yet they plied the drill, each towards his fellow, and while yet there were three cubits to be bored through, there was heard the voice of one calling unto another, for there was a crevice in the rock on the right hand, and on the day of the boring through the stone-cutters struck, each to meet his fellow, drill upon drill; and the water flowed from the source to the pool for a thousand and two hundred cubits, and a hundred cubits was the height of the rock, above the heads of the stone-cutters.' "

So when this conduit was made Jerusalem was assured of water—and was soon in need of it.

## CHAPTER 3

### HEZEKIAH FALLS ILL

It came about that, quite unexpectedly, Hezekiah fell dangerously ill with some boil or abscess.

Isaiah came to visit him and said, "Thus saith Jehovah, ' Give directions concerning thy house, for thou shalt die and not live.' "

Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed earnestly to Jehovah. He reminded Jehovah how he had been true and faithful to him, and he wept with "a great weeping."

But before Isaiah had left the courtyard, he received another message from Jehovah, so he returned to the king.

"Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father, ' I have heard thy prayer, and I have seen thy tears. Behold, I will add unto thy days, fifteen years, and on the third day thou shalt go up to the house of Jehovah.' "

## HEZEKIAH FALLS ILL

"And," added the prophet, "thus saith Jehovah, 'I will deliver thee and this city of Jerusalem out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.'"

And Isaiah said, "Take a lump of figs," and they took and laid it on the boil, and Hezekiah recovered.

But Hezekiah was not quite satisfied, and he said, "What shall be the sign that Jehovah will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of Jehovah on the third day?"

Here again we see how the men and women of the Bible were always seeking for some sign to prove that the word of Jehovah was true.

So Hezekiah asked that the time on the sundial might go backward ten degrees. So Jehovah made the shadow go backwards ten degrees, but how this was done, and what it means exactly, we do not know.

In the book of Isaiah we are given a poem, telling us what Hezekiah felt when he thought he was going to die.

"I said, in the cutting off of my days I shall go to the gates of the grave . . . I shall not see Jehovah, even Jehovah in the land of the living. I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent . . . I did mourn as a dove, mine eyes fail with looking upwards. O Lord I am oppressed. Be surety for me. . . .

"Jehovah was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life in the house of Jehovah."

## CHAPTER 4

### HEZEKIAH MAKES A MISTAKE

Now, somewhere about this time, the son of the king of Babylon, having heard that Hezekiah had been ill and had recovered, took the opportunity to send him congratulations and a present. The king of Babylon was of course a special enemy of the king of Assyria who was threatening Hezekiah, and Hezekiah was glad to receive the messengers.

## HEZEKIAH MAKES A MISTAKE

It was a great honour to be visited by a prince from the court of Babylon, and Hezekiah showed him all his treasures, his spices, his ointments, and the house of jewels. There was, indeed, nothing of value that Hezekiah did not show him.

But Isaiah received a message from Jehovah about this act of folly, and he came to the king and questioned him anxiously.

"What said these men, and whence came they unto thee?"

"They have come from a far country, even from Babylon," answered the king.

"And what have they seen in thy house?"

"All that is in mine house have they seen; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them."

Then said Isaiah, "Hear the word of Jehovah. Behold, the days come when all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left."

Even Hezekiah's descendants would be carried off into captivity into the palace of the king of Babylon.

"Good is the word of Jehovah," said Hezekiah, for he knew that he had been foolish. His only comfort was that the misfortune would not happen in his lifetime.

## CHAPTER 5

### SENNACHERIB

THE worst that Hezekiah and his people feared seemed as though it were to happen.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was stationed at Lachish, in Philistia, for he had been conquering Hittites and Philistines, and he now conquered a number of the walled towns of Judah.

Hezekiah felt that the best thing to be done against so powerful an enemy was to come to some agreement with him. So he sent messengers to Lachish, and humbled himself by proposing to pay some tribute or fine.

Sennacherib was ready with his answer. Hezekiah must send

## SENNACHERIB

300 talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold. This was an enormous sum, and in order to pay it Hezekiah had to rob the Temple of treasures, and send the treasures of his own house. He had to cut off the gold from the doors of the Temple, and from the pillars which he himself had overlaid with gold.

Only by these efforts could he supply the tribute to this grasping Assyrian king.

But Sennacherib was really bent upon establishing his empire in Jerusalem. For Jerusalem was a highly valuable fortress, not only because of its position on the heights, but because of its fortifications.

Therefore he sent off officers, including a man named Rabshakeh, with a great host to besiege Jerusalem and force the king to submit.

It was good that the prophet Isaiah was with Hezekiah. In face of the coming danger Hezekiah set captains of war over the people, and gathered them in the streets, and spoke encouragingly to them.

"Be strong and courageous!" he said. "Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him.

"For with him is an arm of flesh, but with us is Jehovah our God, to fight our battles." And the people leaned themselves upon the words of their king.

But after the way Hezekiah had submitted about the tribute, it was a surprise to Sennacherib that he should now show such opposition. Was he expecting help from Egypt? There must be some strange reason, which must be discovered.

It must have been terrifying indeed when the people saw the Assyrians actually advancing upon their beloved Jerusalem. There were the armies, the archers, the chariots and horses, and the siege engines for which they would build high mounds, drive them against the walls, or shoot from their screened towers.

Yet the Assyrians knew that Jerusalem was a most difficult city to conquer, and they hoped that by threats they might gain their end. If only Rabshakeh could undermine the people's loyalty, and scare them into refusing to obey Hezekiah, his task would be easier.

So Rabshakeh called aloud, that all might hear:

"Speak ye now to Hezekiah, 'Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, "What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?" Thou sayest (but they are vain words), "There is counsel and strength for the war." Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?' Now behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it; so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

"Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, 'Jehovah shall deliver us out of the hand of the Assyrian'? Hath not this same Hezekiah taken away the altars of Jehovah in your land, and said that ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?

"Now therefore, I pray thee, give hostages to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them!"

Then Hezekiah's servants, Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah called out, "Speak, I pray thee, in the Syrian language, for we understand it; and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that are upon the wall."

But Rab-shakeh retorted, "Hath my master only sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? Hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall?"

Then he shouted still louder in the Jews' language, "Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah."

Then he added more enticingly, with wild promises to the people, "Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine and of his fig tree, until I come to take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, of bread and vineyards and olive-yards and of honey, that ye may live and not die! Harken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you saying, 'Jehovah will deliver us!' Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?

"Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have

## SENNACHERIB

delivered their country out of mine hand, that Jehovah shall deliver Jerusalem?"

But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word, for the king's commandment was, "Answer him not."

Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah hurried off to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him Rab-shakeh's words. Hezekiah rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the Temple, and he sent Eliakim and others off to take a message to Isaiah the prophet. But Isaiah had a great message of hope for them:

"Thus shall ye say to your master, ' Thus saith Jehovah, "Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land ". ' "

Such words from the great prophet were cheering indeed, both to the people and the king.

Rab-shakeh returned to his master, and reported that he could get no reply from these obstinate Jews in Jerusalem; and so it came to pass that the king of Assyria sent a letter to Hezekiah, insulting him and his people and, above all, his God.

And Hezekiah, as soon as he received the letter and had read it, took it into the Temple and spread it out before Jehovah.

"O Jehovah," he prayed, "Which dwellest between the cherubims, Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth. O Jehovah, bow down Thine ear and hear, open Jehovah Thine eyes, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib which he hath sent to reproach the living God.

"Of a truth, O Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them.

"Now, therefore, O Jehovah, our God, save Thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Jehovah God, even Thou only."

And even as the king prayed, Isaiah was waiting before God to hear the answer to the king's prayer.



## SENNACHERIB

The instant Jehovah gave his message, Isaiah hurried off to Hezekiah.

"Thus saith Jehovah, 'That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have heard.'" Isaiah assured the king that Jehovah was with him; and as for the king of Assyria:

"Thus saith Jehovah, 'He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city,' saith Jehovah. 'For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.'"

Hope spread right through the city; for if the prophet said that Jehovah was with them, they might surely set aside their dreadful fear.

And it came to pass that night, that the angel of Jehovah went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians (by some contagious pestilence). The army was consumed by it, and next morning the besieged Jews found thousands upon thousands lying dead outside the walls.

This is how an English poet describes what happened:

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold.  
Like the leaves of the forest, when Summer is green,  
That host, with its banners, at sunset was seen.  
Like the leaves of the forest, when Autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,  
And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd,  
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,  
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!  
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  
Hath melted like snow at the glance of the LORD.

So Sennacherib gave up the expedition, and returned to Nineveh.

## SENNACHERIB

It was about twenty years afterwards that, as Sennacherib was worshipping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons conspired against him and murdered him.

Thus Isaiah's message from Jehovah came true.

## CHAPTER 6

### MANASSEH

WE shall be glad that Jerusalem was rescued from the Assyrians at this time, for though within a hundred years the Jews were actually carried away into Babylon, this respite gave some of the people a chance to understand better what Jehovah wished for them. They were not to struggle after world-empire, but to seek to serve Jehovah in their personal and national life.

Yet when Hezekiah was dead, the new king, Manasseh, worked against the ways of Hezekiah, and led the Jews back to idol-worship and every kind of wickedness.

History teaches us that nations are composed of many kinds of men and women, and there were people in Hezekiah's day who were thirsting to get back to the idol-worship. Here was their chance to get hold of the young king, who was only twelve years old when he came to the throne.

Many a young prince, when he ascends his father's throne, likes to make some great change. Manasseh turned his back on those who were responsible for the Temple worship, and refused to be guided by such men as the prophet Isaiah. In fact, we are told that "Manasseh did evil in the sight of Jehovah."

As he grew older, and felt his power, he boldly upset all that his father had tried to do.

He rebuilt the "high places" which Hezekiah had destroyed, and reared up altars to the Baals. He encouraged the people to worship the stars from the flat roofs of their houses, and, indeed, he built altars to the stars in the courts of the Temple. Little children were cruelly sacrificed to the gods, and he even sacrificed his own son.

## MANASSEH

When the true followers of Jehovah protested, Manasseh set going a terrible persecution against them, and shed innocent blood till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another. The Jews have a tradition that Manasseh actually caused Isaiah, now an old man, to be martyred.

But there came a day when Manasseh was carried off in chains to Babylon, and when in prison, suffering pain and misery, he remembered the evil he had done; and he humbled himself before Jehovah, and asked for forgiveness, and implored Him that he might return to Jerusalem. Jehovah answered his prayer, and Manasseh learnt at last that Jehovah was the real God, and that all the Baals, the stars, the Asherahs which men worshipped, were no gods after all.

We do not know the date at which Manasseh returned to Jerusalem, but he reigned in all for fifty-five years, and tried to undo some of the evil he had done.

His son, who followed him on the throne, only reigned two years, for he was murdered by his servants; so Manasseh's grandson, Josiah, was made king by the people. He was another of the very young kings, for he was only eight years old when he ascended the throne.

Josiah reigned for thirty-one years, and he "did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah."

## CHAPTER 7

### A GREAT DISCOVERY

**It is** clear that Josiah must have been supported by some good counsellors, men who were faithful to Jehovah, and who rallied round the king with new hope in their hearts.

In his eighteenth year he began to seek after the God of David his forefather, and was hard at work destroying the idols and carved and molten images and altars of the false gods.

We shall guess that the Temple needed cleansing and clearing of all signs of the evil practices which Manasseh had instituted;

## A GREAT DISCOVERY

though before his death Manasseh may have done some of this work himself, after he had repented of his wickedness.

But the Temple needed a great deal of repair, and it came to pass that in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan, the scribe, to the Temple, saying, "Go up to Hilkiah, the high priest, that he may weigh out the money which the door-keepers have gathered from the people. Let this money be delivered over to those who have the oversight of the house of Jehovah, and let them give it unto the carpenters and builders and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house." Howbeit, there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully.

Now it happened that while Hilkiah was looking through some of the Temple treasures, and putting them in order, he made a very startling discovery, and he called Shaphan into his counsels. He had come across a book which turned out to be part of the Book of Deuteronomy, which contained a great deal of the Law and teachings of Moses. It is possible that it had been hidden in the Temple for safety, during the Manasseh persecutions.

We can see by this incident that many valuable copies of the Law must have been destroyed, and how scarce they were, or Hilkiah and Shaphan would not have been so excited at finding this ancient roll.

Hilkiah handed over the roll to Shaphan, and the scribe read it right through. Then Shaphan returned to the king.

"Thy servants have paid out the money to the overseers of the house of Jehovah," he said. Then he added, "And Hilkiah the priest hath handed to me this book also."

Whether the king understood at first how very exciting the discovery was we cannot say, but, there and then, the scribe had to sit down and read aloud the book to the king, Hilkiah, and others.

The longer he read, the more agitated the king became. If this that Shaphan was reading was in truth the law of Moses and Jehovah, how many things they had done which they ought not to have done, and left undone which they ought to have done!

As Shaphan came to the last word, the king rose up and rent his clothes.

## A GREAT DISCOVERY

**“Go ye,” he exclaimed, “and inquire of Jehovah for me, and for the people and for all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is kindled against us; because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all which is written concerning us.”**

Now there was a prophetess lived in Jerusalem, whose name was Huldah. They talked over the matter with Huldah, and showed her the book, and Huldah asked of Jehovah that He would give a message for the king

“Tell the king who sent you to me,” she said at last: “Thus saith Jehovah, ‘Behold I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before Jehovah, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and hast rent thy clothes and wept before Me, behold therefore, I will gather thee to thy fathers in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.’”

So they brought Huldah's words to the king, and the king knew what he must do. Every one must hear all the words in the book. So he sent and gathered the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, and he went up into the house of Jehovah, and with him were the prophets and the priests and all the people, both small and great. The book was read aloud, and the king stood by a pillar, and he and the people agreed to carry out what was written in this book.

Afterwards the king commanded that any vessels that had been used in the service of the false gods should be brought out of the Temple and flung down and burned by the brook Kedron. The false priests were executed, and the altars on which human sacrifices had been offered were smashed up. Josiah took away the horses, which the kings of Judah had presented in honour of the Sun-god, and he burned the Sun-chariots.

Amongst many other acts, Josiah brought the people together,

## A GREAT DISCOVERY

as Hezekiah had done, for a joyous celebration of the Passover Feast.

Now, while all this was happening in Judah, storms of war were raging outside, for Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt were contending for world-empire. The Assyrians were, in fact, making their last struggle against the might of Babylon, and four years after Josiah's death, after a most fearful siege, Nineveh fell to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

We heard that the prophetess had promised Josiah that he should die in peace, but this did not happen, because Josiah did a foolish act. Towards the end of his reign, Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt launched an attack upon Assyria, and he mustered a great army, and planned to go through Northern Canaan. Josiah decided, very unwisely, that he would take a share in this quarrel, and would attack Pharaoh-Necho as soon as he arrived in the north.

But as soon as Pharaoh-Necho learnt that Josiah was coming out against him from Jerusalem he sent ambassadors to him, saying, "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I have come not against thee this day, but against the Assyrians with whom I make war. And God hath given command to speed me; forbear thou from interfering with God."

But Josiah was quite determined to take his own way, and he ordered out his army, and met Pharaoh at Megiddo—the scene, we shall remember, of the great battle between Sisera and Barak.

But the archers shot at King Josiah, and wounded him, and he said to his servants:

"Have me away, for I am sore wounded."

His servants therefore took him from the chariot, and placed him in a spare one, and hurried him back to Jerusalem, where he died.

Josiah was buried in the royal sepulchre, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him, and the singing men and singing women sang a Lament, which was written by a young prophet named Jeremiah. We shall learn much more about Jeremiah as we travel on.



## CHAPTER I

### A YOUNG MAN'S CHOICE

**W**HEN the boy-king Josiah came to the throne, another boy was growing up in Anathoth, a small town to the north-west of Jerusalem, less than an hour's walk away. A settlement of priests lived at Anathoth, and this boy, Jeremiah, was of the tribe of Levi, and one of his ancestors was Eli, the guardian of Samuel.

It is probable that the prophetess Huldah and her husband were Jeremiah's uncle and aunt, and he was brought up amongst some who were faithful to Jehovah. The members of the settlement spent much time writing and copying old stories from the past, so many of which we now know. Jeremiah must have learnt a great deal about the Law of Moses, and he may have read the writings of the prophet Isaiah, of Micah and Hosea. But we cannot tell how many of these precious writings had been destroyed by the Baal party.

This quiet, sensitive boy would hear much talk and discussion about what was happening in the nation, and of what had happened in the dreadful days when Manasseh was persecuting the faithful. He would soon discover that grown-up people were not agreed as to what is right and what is wrong.

Some insisted that the idols, the sacred shrines, the Asherah and the sacred poles, were worthy of worship, while some were keenly anxious to bring all the nation back to the worship of Jehovah.

## A YOUNG MAN'S CHOICE

The new king, Josiah, filled many with great hope, and the rumours that the worship of the false gods was to be put down must have stirred this boy, who from earliest childhood had been chosen out by Jehovah for the great task of his life.

For Jeremiah was not to have an easy life. He was to call his own nation to repentance, and in almost every case later on he found himself on the unpopular side.

We all like to be on the popular side, and Jeremiah's hard task began when he was little more than a boy. When Jehovah's call came to him very definitely, he shrank back, and hesitated as Moses had hesitated. It was startling indeed to be told that he was appointed as a prophet, and the words of Jehovah struck right to his very soul. We do not know how old he was, but probably under twenty, and he tells us the story himself.

"Ah! Lord God," exclaimed Jeremiah, "behold I cannot speak; for I am a child.

"But Jehovah said unto me, 'Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all to whom I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee,' saith Jehovah

"Then Jehovah put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and Jehovah said unto me:

" 'Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the kingdoms to root out and to pull down, and to throw down, to build and to plant.' "

This message showed clearly that Jeremiah would pass his life in opposing the masses of his generation, and the thought was very hard and bitter to him.

But God saw that Jeremiah had a brave spirit, and already understood that the promise given to Abraham did not mean that the Jews were to reach mighty world-glory, but were called to be a holy and God-fearing nation, to shine as a light of God amongst the surrounding heathendom. Indeed, had they chosen, they might have become a great missionary nation, to lead the way to happiness and truth.

But, with some noble exceptions, the kings with their peoples were determined to be great and rich, and to worship idols and follow the ways of other nations. They had no wish to lead them.



## A YOUNG MAN'S CHOICE

So it became necessary for Jehovah to work out a new plan for His chosen people. They must be exiled from their land, their shrines, their idols, and even from their Temple; in order that they might suffer and learn, and find out that the Jehovah they had despised was a Father who loved them with a great love and pity.

But the Jews did not understand this yet, and when Josiah was dead we cannot be surprised that they were very angry with Jeremiah, and thought him unpatriotic, because he so constantly warned them of troubles to come.

Yet listen to what Jehovah said to his young servant, "Thou therefore, tighten thy belt, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes, the priests, and the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee, and they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to deliver thee."

In our Bible there is a long book called "The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah," and in it are the warnings and threatenings which Jeremiah gave, not only to Judah but to other nations. His warnings and threats were often hard, but through them all there is a longing tenderness that his people should obey Jehovah and be happy.

He speaks sometimes as though Jehovah was hurt, and His heart made sad, because the people refused to love Him and to follow the right way. Here are one or two peeps into the heart of Jeremiah, which will help us to understand the exciting story which follows.

"And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, 'Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'I remember the kindness of thy youth, and how thou wentest after Me in the wilderness. . . . What unrighteousness have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity? . . . The priests say not, "Where is Jehovah?"' and the prophets prophesied by Baal. . . . Wherefore I will yet plead with you,' saith Jehovah, 'and with your children's children will I plead . . . Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, for

## A YOUNG MAN'S CHOICE

My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water'”'”

And here is what Jeremiah says from himself, poured out of the passionate love of his heart, “For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt! Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”

It was not until after the death of Josiah that Jeremiah's most difficult task began.

Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, only reigned three months, and then Pharaoh-Necho carried him off to Egypt, where he died. Then Pharaoh put his brother Jehoiakim on the throne, on condition that he should become his vassal, and give a tribute of an immense sum of money.

At this time Jeremiah was in Jerusalem, anxious to learn how affairs were going, and he soon saw that the new king was opposed to Jehovah and prepared to “do evil in the sight of Jehovah.”

## CHAPTER 2

### A PROPHET MARTYRED

AT the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, God sent Jeremiah to stand forth in the Temple Court, and warn the people of what would come upon them, if they forsook Jehovah.

“Speak all the words that I command thee; diminish not a word,” said Jehovah.

So Jeremiah stood out bravely enough, and spoke all that Jehovah commanded, with the result that he was seized upon by the priests and the false prophets, and by a section of the people, who shouted that he must die.

There was wild excitement in Jerusalem, for some were on Jeremiah's side, and some were against him, and the authorities from the king's palace came out to see what the tumult was about.

The story is not altogether clear, but it appears as though some

## A PROPHET MARTYRED

from the palace, remembering good king Josiah, were for Jeremiah, and that some of the people also supported him.

The priests and false prophets made their accusation: "This man is worthy to die, for he hath prophesied against this city."

But Jeremiah made a bold appeal to the crowd and to the authorities, and said, "Jehovah sent me to prophesy all the words that ye have heard. Therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah, and Jehovah will repent Him of the evil that He hath pronounced against you. As for me, behold I am in your hands. Do unto me as seemeth good to you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city and the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears."

Then the authorities and people said to the priests and the false prophets, "This man is not worthy to die; for he hath spoken to us in the name of Jehovah our God."

Also some of the Elders came forward and spoke to the crowd. They explained that a prophet had spoken hard words in the days of Hezekiah, who had not put him to death but had repented.

A prophet named Urijah had also prophesied the same message as Jeremiah. But the king, and those who were on the king's side, had no intention of submitting to such words, and the sad end of the story is that Urijah had to fly to Egypt; but Jehoiakim sent after him, and had him brought back to Jerusalem to be executed.

As for Jeremiah, he was saved from the king by friends who loved him and guarded him, and especially by Ahikam, the son of Shaphan the Scribe (he who had read the long lost Book to Josiah), who seems to have been in high authority.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE BURNT ROLL

ONE day Jehovah told Jeremiah to write down in a roll a last warning for Judah, in case Jehoiakim chose to repent before it was

## THE BURNT ROLL

too late. So Jeremiah called a young man named Baruch, that he might dictate to him.

Now, for some reason, Jeremiah had been forbidden to enter the Temple, so he said to Baruch, "Go thou and read in the roll which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of Jehovah, in the ears of the people in Jehovah's house upon the fasting day; and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities. It may be that they will entreat Jehovah and return every one from his evil way; for great is the anger and fury that Jehovah hath pronounced against this people."

So a fast was proclaimed, and the people came up from their cities to Jerusalem, and Baruch read out the hot, burning words from the roll.

Now, Michaiah, the grandson of Shaphan, rushed off to the palace, and earnestly consulted with some of the officials; for he was deeply interested in the roll, and it was certain that Jeremiah would now be in great danger. The official instantly sent for Baruch, and ordered him to bring the roll with him.

So Baruch came before them, bringing the roll in his hand, and was told to sit down and read it. But as they listened they were the more afraid, and looked at one another anxiously. They knew they would have to report to the king.

"Tell us, now," they said, "how didst thou write all these words at Jeremiah's mouth?"

"He pronounced all these words, and I wrote them with ink in the book," said Baruch.

Then the officials, who wished to be friendly, said, "Go; hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye be."

So Baruch hurried away, and the officials reported upon the roll to king Jehoiakim, and he wished to hear it. A man named Jehudi then read the roll to him and to the others that stood about him.

Now, the king sat in the winter house, and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass that when Jehudi had read three of four leaves, the king then cut them with his knife, and cast them into the fire on the hearth; and so, as the reading went on, the king threw the other leaves into the fire, so that the roll was consumed.

## THE BURNT ROLL

The king and his friends were not afraid at the warnings they had heard, and did not tear their garments with grief, and when some who had come in with the roll pleaded with the king not to burn it, he would not hear them. Indeed, when the roll had been read and destroyed, Jehoiakim ordered Jeremiah and Baruch to be arrested. Happily, however, they could not be found, for Jehovah had hidden them.

Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah.

"Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned."

Jeremiah was also told to add even more urgent warnings, for indeed it was as though a doom were gathering round this obstinate king and his people, and was coming nearer and nearer.

## CHAPTER 4

### JEREMIAH IS PLACED IN THE STOCKS

As we look at the map, we can see Babylon, the capital of the rising Chaldean Empire, which was now carrying all before it.

Nebuchadnezzar was able and ambitious, and he wished to gather all the small nations round about into one vast Empire. He was dominating Assyria and Egypt, and he had no intention of allowing the tiny Kingdom of Judah to stand out against him.

We must understand, however, that Nebuchadnezzar's desire was that Judah should pay him tribute and acknowledge him as overlord, that he had no wish to destroy her.

The trouble in Judah was that the King and a large party with him were quite determined to keep their independence, and we cannot blame them for that. But Jeremiah knew that Jehovah's will was that the Jews should be, not a mighty nation, but a God-fearing nation, and that if they refused this great destiny, and went on worshipping the Baals and oppressing the poor and being unjust and cruel to one another, the only hope for them was that

## JEREMIAH IS PLACED IN THE STOCKS

they should be carried away from their land and taught through loneliness and sadness the way back to Him.

But the King and the Baal party overruled the rest of the nation, and so the doom came ever nearer.

One day Jehovah told Jeremiah to go and watch a potter moulding vessels out of clay. Jeremiah watched, and he noticed that as the clay was whirled round on the wheel it was spoiled ; so the potter took back the clay, and remoulded it, until at last it became the shape of the vessel he wanted.

This was like a parable to Jeremiah, teaching him that Jehovah would go on patiently moulding His people, until they became the beautiful shape He wished them to be.

A little later, Jehovah told Jeremiah to take a potter's vessel, and, accompanied by some of the elders, carry it to the valley of Hinnom.

Here he was to give another urgent warning and to smash the pot in the sight of all the people, and cry:

"Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, ' Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel.' "

We shall not be surprised that the chief governor of the Temple, whose name was Pashur, was furious with Jeremiah, and refused to believe the solemn warning. He had him arrested, and placed in the stocks at the Benjamin gate of Jerusalem, so that all who passed by might mock him.

Jeremiah was very sensitive, for we shall remember that from early manhood he had shrunk from being a prophet, and he was learning how hard it was to stand out against the popular spirit. He was in the stocks all the long night, and it felt to him as though he could not bear any more. He wished to stop giving these hard warnings to his beloved nation, and to let it go its own way.

"I will not make mention of Jehovah, nor speak any more in His name!" he said to himself. And yet again he answered himself:

"Jehovah's word was in my heart, like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary trying to keep in the words, and they had to rush forth."

And when on the morrow Pashur had him released from the stocks, Jeremiah warned him that, because he had prophesied

## JEREMIAH IS PLACED IN THE STOCKS

lies to the people, he would himself, with all his family, be carried captive to Babylon, where he would die and where he and all his friends would be buried.

## CHAPTER 5

### PART OF THE DOOM FALLS

So it came about that Nebuchadnezzar advanced upon Judah, and compelled Jehoiakim to become his vassal and to pay him tribute. But after three years, Jehoiakim fancied himself strong enough to rebel; the rebellion, however, failed, and the king was carried off in chains to Babylon, and his son Jehoiachin reigned in his stead.

The names of the father and son are very much alike, so we must not confuse them.

Now after Jehoiachin had reigned three months, supporting, alas, the idol-worshippers amongst his people, Nebuchadnezzar came up in yet stronger force to subdue Jerusalem. Though he had not conquered Egypt itself, he had taken all the lands adjoining it, and he wished to have full power over the country which bordered upon it and had a coast line on the Great Sea. Jehoiachin looked with dismay upon the great host, and the engines for a siege, and he decided that his only hope was to surrender.

It was a sad day indeed when Jehoiachin, his mother, his wives, his nobles, and his chief servants opened the gates of Jerusalem, and delivered themselves up as captives. Nebuchadnezzar carried them off to Babylon, together with ten thousand of the finest soldiers, and a thousand skilled craftsmen and smiths.

Nebuchadnezzar gathered great treasure from the palace and from the Temple, and he set Jehoiachin's uncle on the throne, changing his name from Mattaniah to Zedekiah.

Surely now the Jews would be willing to agree that their patient prophet Jeremiah had been right in his warnings.

Yet we are told that this new King Zedekiah did evil in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

## THE LETTER TO BABYLON

### CHAPTER 6'

#### THE LETTER TO BABYLON

WE must realise that when a king like Nebuchadnezzar carried off vast masses of captives, it did not mean that all these people need be miserable, if they could fit in with their new surroundings.

This changing about of populations from one land to another was a definite policy to weaken such nations, and was, of course, very cruel in certain ways. But Nebuchadnezzar had a great ambition that Babylon should prosper, and that the land over which he ruled should be put to the best use.

We shall take our journey into Babylon shortly, and see that some of the most able of the Jews were actually brought to live at the king's court. But it was not easy at first for the exiled Jews to submit to their conditions, for they had been torn from their homes and their positions, and were like "nobodies," or worse, in this strange land. Some of their number acted as false prophets, and began to make mischief amongst the exiles, stirring them up to rebellion, and this sort of action could only bring about more misery.

This exile was indeed like a punishment, to which they must submit; yet Jehovah was sorry for His poor disobedient children, and He told Jeremiah to write them a letter, warning them against rebellion, yet promising them forgiveness and hope.

Here is part of the letter which the poor exiles must have read with sad hearts:

"Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, unto all that are carried away captive, 'Build ye houses and dwell in them, and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. Marry wives and have families of children, and give your sons and daughters in marriage also. Seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried away, and pray unto Jehovah for it, for in the peace of the city where ye live, ye shall have peace.'"

Then after giving them warning against false and mischief-making prophets, Jeremiah continued Jehovah's message.

"'After seventy years I will revisit you, and you shall return



## THE LETTER TO BABYLON

to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think of you. Thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you hope. Ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye search for Me, with your whole heart. And I will be found of you,' saith Jehovah, 'and I will turn again your captivity, and will gather you from all nations.' "

## CHAPTER 7

### THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

IN spite of all that Jeremiah could urge, Zedekiah had the folly to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. Had he had Jehovah on his side, all would have been well; but not only was Jehovah against such rebellion, but Zedekiah's army had been robbed by Nebuchadnezzar of all the finest soldiers. The answer to his challenge was that the Chaldean siege armies gathered round Jerusalem. As for Jeremiah, whom the king thought of as an enemy rather than as a friend, he was shut up in the court of the king's prison.

For Zedekiah said, "Wherefore dost thou prophesy and say, 'Thus saith Jehovah, "Behold I will give this city into the hand of the King of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah shall not escape, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the King of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper." ' "

But Jeremiah's message was not without hope, for over and over again he prophesied that the days would come when the Jews would come back from the foreign lands and live once again in Judah and Jerusalem.

Here is a little incident which will remind us of the story of Boaz when he redeemed the land and married Ruth.

Let Jeremiah tell what happened.

"Hanameel, my uncle's son, came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of Jehovah, and said unto me, 'Buy

## THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself.'

"Then I knew that this was a message from Jehovah.

"So I bought the field, and weighed out the money, even seven shekels and ten pieces of silver, and I wrote in the book and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to law and custom, and that which was open. I did this before all the Jews who sat in the court of the prison.

"Then I charged Baruch before them, saying:

" 'Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, "Take these evidences of the purchase which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days; 'for thus saith the God of Israel,' Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land." ' "

While the armies of Babylon were surrounding the city, while Jeremiah was himself prophesying that Jerusalem would go down, he yet bought a piece of land a few miles outside the city, as a proof that he believed that Jehovah would indeed bring back His people once more. The story was repeated amongst the people, and it may have given a ray of hope to some of them.

Now, Zedekiah was not altogether unfriendly to Jeremiah, and some time after this he sent for him secretly from a terrible prison in which some of the princes had placed him, and said: "Is there any word from Jehovah?"

"There is," said Jeremiah, sadly enough; "thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon."

Moreover, Jeremiah said to the king, "Wherein have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, 'The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?' Therefore hear me, I pray thee, my lord the king, that thou cause me not to return to the prison of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there."

Then Zedekiah commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. And as the famine increased, and the miseries of the

## THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

besieged people grew, some of Jeremiah's enemies heard that he had given the people a message from Jehovah saying, "He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live."

So the princes went urgently to the king, who knew after all that Jeremiah was seeking to save him from some dreadful fate.

"We beseech you," they cried to the king, "let this man be put to death, for he seeketh not the welfare of this people but their hurt."

If only Zedekiah could have foreseen the hurt from which Jeremiah was seeking to save him, he would not have acted as he did; but he was weak, and felt himself helpless, and left Jeremiah in the princes' hands.

So they seized Jeremiah, and let him down by cords into disused well. There was no water in the well, but only filthy mire, into which Jeremiah sank. But he was not altogether without friends, and when an Egyptian named Ebed-melech heard what the princes had done, he went straight off to the king, who was seated by the Benjamin Gate.

"My lord, the king," he said, "these men have done evil in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. He is like to die in the place where he is, for there is no bread in the city."

Then Zedekiah plucked up courage to tell Ebed-melech to take three men with him, and rescue Jeremiah from the well. So Ebed-melech chose out three men whom he could trust, and they found some old rotten cloths and rags, and let them down by cords to Jeremiah, and told him to put them under his armpits. So Jeremiah did so, and they managed to draw him up out of the filthy well, and he remained in the court of the prison.

Poor Zedekiah! He could not help believing in Jeremiah, and he sent for him once again in secret that he might ask him something.

"Hide nothing from me," he pleaded.

"If I tell thee, thou wilt surely put me to death," said Jeremiah, "and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou hearken unto me?"

So Zedekiah swore secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, "As Jehovah liveth, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hands of these men that seek thy life."

## THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

So Jeremiah made his last urgent appeal. If the king would surrender to the Chaldeans he would be saved, but if he refused, he could not escape.

But the king had not the courage to withstand his nobles, and he sent Jeremiah back to the court of the prison, with a warning that he was not to tell the princes what had happened.

The great siege-engines won. A breach was made in the wall, the Chaldeans entered, the soldiers deserted in masses, and Zedekiah fled. He was captured near Jericho, and brought before his angry overlord who had placed him on his throne, and to whom he had sworn obedience.

Nebuchadnezzar showed no mercy. Zedekiah's two sons were executed in the sight of their father; his own eyes were then put out, and he was sent in chains to Babylon, where he remained in prison till he died.

Nebuzar-adan, the captain in authority, broke down the city walls, destroyed the Temple and the Palace, and many houses were burnt with fire. Nebuzar-adan decided who were to be sent off to Babylon, and who were to remain to look after the fields and the vineyards.

The captain treated Jeremiah with respect, and said to him, "Behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thy hands. If it seem good unto thee to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look well to thee; but if it seem ill to thee to come, forbear; behold, all the land is before thee; whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go."

So Jeremiah decided to stay amongst the poor in Judah.

## CHAPTER 8

### JEREMIAH'S STRUGGLE

NONE of us can imagine what Judah was like when the captive population had been carried off. The contest was over. Homes had been broken up, families parted, and there was sorrow and dismay from one end of the little kingdom to the other.

## JEREMIAH'S STRUGGLE

But it was not the Chaldean policy to wreck the lands which they had annexed, and Nebuzar-adan, Nebuchadnezzar's captain, before leaving the country, appointed a wise ruler from amongst the Jews to act as governor under the king of Babylon. The new ruler's name was Gedaliah, and he was the grandson of Shaphan, the man who had read the lost roll to King Josiah.

Gedaliah was faithful to Jehovah, and had always been friendly with Jeremiah. He had now to do his best to put things into some kind of order, and to take authority over the vine-dressers and the agricultural labourers, and see after the desolate women and children. Gedaliah set up his government at Mizpah, and Jeremiah went with him, and we may be sure that he helped him greatly.

Very soon, a number of the captains and soldiers who had fled from Jerusalem, and many who had fled into Moab and Edom and to the country of the Ammonites, began to gather back to their own land. Amongst them was a man named Ishmael, who was of the royal house of David, and he pretended to be so friendly that Gedaliah trusted him completely.

Gedaliah, in the name of the Chaldean Government, was able to assure the Jews that they had nothing to fear, so long as they remained loyal to the king of Babylon. They could grow their fruits and gather their harvests, and live in the towns they chose, and all would be well. The good news spread, and many who had fled to the hills took courage and returned, and Gedaliah had a busy time arranging for their needs, and advising them how and where to live.

But the King of Ammon was casting a jealous eye from across the Jordan on this remnant of Jews, and found in Ishmael a ready traitor to serve him. One day Gedaliah was surprised when one of his captains, named Johanan, asked him if he might go and slay Ishmael.

"Do you know," he said, "that the King of Ammon has sent Ishmael to take thy life?"

But Gedaliah could not believe Johanan, and he said to him, "Thou shalt not do this thing, for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael."

But, alas, the suspicion turned out to be the truth! Ishmael arrived one day with ten followers, and Gedaliah invited them to a meal. As we know, it was considered the height of treachery





## JEREMIAH'S STRUGGLE

to kill a man with whom one has just eaten food, yet this is what Ishmael did. He and his confederates killed, not only Gedaliah, but some of the Jews and Chaldeans who were also present.

The traitors, who were, in fact, acting for the King of Ammon, made captives of many of the people, and captured King Zedekiah's daughters who had taken refuge with Gedaliah, and they started off to carry them beyond Jordan. But Johanan, with a band of men, rescued the prisoners and brought them back into the country round Bethlehem.

It was a very awkward position, for who knew what the King of Babylon would now do? Johanan and his fellows began to think that it would be wisest for them all to escape into Egypt. So Johanan and the captains and the people gathered to Jeremiah and said, "Pray for us unto Jehovah, even for all this remnant (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us), that Jehovah thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do."

So Jeremiah agreed to pray to Jehovah, and to keep back nothing from the answer he received. The people answered, "Jehovah, be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which Jehovah thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good or evil, we will obey the voice of Jehovah our God."

So Jeremiah prayed to Jehovah, and in ten days he brought back the answer.

Meanwhile there was a change of mood which Jeremiah could feel, for Johanan and others had already made up their minds that they would go to Egypt. But this brave prophet spoke out with his usual clearness:

"Thus saith Jehovah, 'If ye will still abide in this land, then I will build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for the time for mercy has come. Be not afraid of the King of Babylon, for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.'"

Then Jeremiah went on to warn them against disobedience, and he could see that opposition was rising. Johanan, the very man who had once helped him, and others exclaimed:

"Thou speakest falsely; Jehovah hath not sent thee to say

T.T.B.

*An angel of God stayed beside Daniel all through the night.*



## JEREMIAH'S STRUGGLE

**'Go not into Egypt to dwell there.' It is Baruch who is setting thee against us, to deliver us into the hands of the Chaldeans."**

So Jeremiah failed, and found himself once again in opposition to the public will. The people refused his message, and a great party of them set forth to go down into Egypt, and they forced Jeremiah to go with them

From the Bible we know little more as to what happened to Jeremiah. Some traditions say that the Jews stoned him to death in Egypt, others say that he escaped safely to Babylon.

But as a writer has said of him:

"Jeremiah did not need a death of violence to make him a true martyr. To die, with none to record the time and the manner of his death, was the right end for one who had spoken all along, not to win the praise of men, but because the word of the Lord was in him as a burning fire."

Before we take leave of one of the bravest prophets whom the Jews ever despised, and whose heart they broke, let us read a few lines from his writings, which show how he brought to the world new and more beautiful thoughts of Jehovah than they had yet known:

"Behold, the days come,' saith Jehovah, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them.

"But this will be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel,' saith Jehovah, 'I will put My law within them, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My People.

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother saying, 'Know Jehovah,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' "



## Part Nineteen

### CHAPTER I

#### THE BOOK OF JOB

“THE Book of Job,” said the writer, Thomas Carlyle, “is one of the grandest things ever written by a pen. There is nothing written in the Bible or out of it of equal literary merit.”

No one knows who wrote this book, but the life set before us fits in with very early times.

It may be a true story of some ancient patriarch, or it may be a parable written in poetic form, to help the writer to make clear something which troubles him, and about which he wishes to argue.

We have, each of us, been puzzled at hearing of sad misfortunes which have happened to those we know. Perhaps some boys and

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girls have lost their parents, or some one has had an accident; or perhaps a child is born blind or crippled.

We wonder whose fault it was, and whether some one has been to blame about it. The Israelites, as we have found, put down many a misfortune to the anger of God.

Then we have been puzzled to notice that those who do right do not always win. Sometimes the cheat or the selfish boy or girl seems to get the best of it.

Questions like these troubled men and women thousands of years ago, and it is very wonderful that we, to-day, can follow out some of these thoughts, as we travel through the "Book of Job."

The writer begins:

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and shrank back from evil

And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.

Job owned seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and drink with them.

And it was so, when the week's feasting was completed, Job sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings to the number of them all; for Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts."

Now there came a day when the angels came to present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan, the Adversary, arrived with them.

"Whence comest thou?" asked Jehovah.

"From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it," answered Satan.

"Hast thou considered my servant Job?" asked Jehovah, "that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and shrinks back from evil?"

Satan answered:

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"Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his cattle is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and Job will curse Thee to Thy face!"

"Behold, all that Job hath, I give into thy power," said Jehovah. "Only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah.

Now, there came a day when Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house.

And there came a messenger unto Job and said: "The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them; and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said:

"The Chaldeans made three bands, and rushed upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and behold there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house and it fell upon them, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head and fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said, "Naked I was born, naked I shall die. Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away. Blessed be the name of Jehovah."

And Jehovah saw that His faithful servant did not curse Him, but blessed His name.

## SATAN IS NOT SATISFIED

### CHAPTER 2

#### SATAN IS NOT SATISFIED

AGAIN the angels came before Jehovah, and again Satan came with them, and Jehovah asked him again, "From whence comest thou?"

"From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it," came the answer.

"Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and shrinks aside from evil? Hast thou seen that he is still faithful to Me, although thou movedst Me against him, to destroy him without cause?"

And Satan answered, "Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face."

"Behold he is in thine hand," said Jehovah, "only touch not his life."

So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot to his crown. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself. And he sat down among the ashes.

The only advice his wife had for Job in his misery was that he should curse God and die. But Job answered her, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Now, when three friends of Job heard what had happened to him they consulted together, and agreed that they would mourn with Job and try to comfort him. Their names were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

But when they actually saw Job, he was so changed that they scarcely knew him. They broke into loud weeping, and rent their clothes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads. They sat down on the ground with him, seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great.

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But at last Job spoke, and his first words were to curse his own birthday.

"Let the day perish wherein I was born! Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it. Let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it. Let it not be joined unto the days of the year."

Job longed for death, that he might be at rest. He wanted to escape to the place where "the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together. They hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, and dig for it, more than for hid treasure?"

We shall see that Job was not, however, cursing God, and that Satan had failed in his challenge.

Then the three friends started a long argument with Job, trying to prove that he must have been very wicked in some way, or such trouble would not have come down upon him from God.

Job admits that he has done wrong things, but he tries to prove that he has done his best.

"If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my food alone, and the fatherless have not eaten thereof, if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering, if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, if I have done any injury to the fatherless, then let mine arm fall from the shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone."

Job longs that someone should stand between him and Jehovah to plead for him, and at last he breaks out in words which have been set to music by Handel, and which are sung and listened to in many lands to-day.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though this body shall be destroyed, I shall, in my flesh, see God!"

The most splendid part of this Poem is when Jehovah arrives on the scene in a whirlwind, and proves to Job and his friends what

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a small puny thing man is, when he tries to set himself up in comparison with God.

Jehovah pours out his questions which Job can but answer in one way. Here are a few of them.

"Where wast thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth . . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the angels shouted for joy?

"Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? Declare it, if thou knowest it all!

"Where is the way where light dwelleth? As for the darkness, where is the place thereof?

"Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?

"Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder?

"Canst thou send the lightnings that they may go, and say unto thee, 'Here we are!'

"Gavest thou goodly wings unto the peacocks? Or wings and feathers to the ostrich?

"Hast thou given the horse his strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

"Doth the hawk fly at thy wisdom? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command and make her nest on high?"

At last Job answered Jehovah, by crying out:

"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." And he added humbly enough, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

And it was so, that after Jehovah had spoken these words to Job, He spoke to the three friends and said to Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath.

"Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, in case I deal with you for your folly."

So the sacrifices were offered, and Job prayed for his friends

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who had hurt him so much with their talk, and in the end Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had had before, and restored him to perfect health.

His brothers and sisters, and all who had known him before, came round to eat bread with him in his house, and they bemoaned him and comforted him over all the evil that Jehovah had brought upon him. Every man brought a piece of money and each an ornament of gold.

“So Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters, and in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job.”







## CHAPTER I

### FOUR YOUNG PRINCES

**W**E must now take our journey across Jordan to Babylon, so that we may follow the exiles and learn what happened to some of them. We may have to go north and then southwards along the Euphrates, or possibly cross part of the Syrian desert.

We shall remember that Jehoiachin was carried off into captivity, and at that time a number of boys of high families and of royal blood were also brought from Judah. As Nebuchadnezzar noticed these boys, he saw that they were far from being ordinary captives, and would be worth educating so that they might be of value to his kingdom when they grew older.

So he commanded his officer, Ashpenaz, to choose out such of these boys as were handsome, physically fit, and skilful and clever

## FOUR YOUNG PRINCES

enough to take advantage of instruction in the knowledge of the day. They were to be taught the Chaldean language, and were to have special food and wine from the king's own table, so that at the end of three years they might be ready to stand in the king's presence and be useful to him.

Amongst these children of Judah were four boys, Daniel, whose name was changed to Belteshazzar, and three others, whose names were changed to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

It was a tremendous change for these boys to be brought from Judah to the great city of Babylon, for here there was no Temple, and no worship of Jehovah, and no prophet to whom they might turn. Yet all four of them had learnt of Jehovah, and must have known Jeremiah, and they were determined to do what they could to honour God even in this land in which they felt so strange and lonely.

The first test which came to Daniel was that of food. The Jews had very strict rules as to what food they might and might not eat, and if they ate anything forbidden by the law they felt themselves "defiled." So Daniel had the courage to ask Ashpenaz whether he need defile himself with the king's meat and wine.

Ashpenaz looked at this Jewish boy with interest, for he had already a "tender love" for him, and he replied cautiously, "I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink; for why should he see you looking unhealthy and different from the others? Why shall ye make me endanger my head to the king?"

But Daniel was not easily discouraged, and he and his three companions went to the steward who had the actual charge of the food, and asked him to feed them on vegetable-food and water for ten days.

"Then," said Daniel, "let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants."

So the steward agreed to give them the test, and at the end of the ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. So the steward was quite satisfied, and allowed them to

## FOUR YOUNG PRINCES

go on living on the vegetable-food and water which they had chosen.

As the years passed, these four gained knowledge and skill and learning, and Daniel had a special understanding in all visions and dreams.

At the end of the time, Ashpenaz brought the four young men before Nebuchadnezzar, and the king talked with them, and found them full of wisdom and understanding, and wiser than his own magicians and astrologers.

## CHAPTER 2

### NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

THERE came a time when Nebuchadnezzar found himself worried with dreams so strange that his spirit was troubled and his sleep broke from him.

There was one extraordinary dream which made him very anxious, all the more because when daylight came, and he waked, he could not remember what it was. So he called together the magicians and astrologers, and famous Chaldean sorcerers, that they might help him.

When they stood before the great king, he said:

"I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream."

"O king, live for ever!" they answered. "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

But the king answered fiercely, "The dream is gone from me. If ye will not make known unto me the dream and the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill; but if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honours."

"Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it," they pleaded.

But the king answered hotly, "I know of a certainty that ye

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would gain time, because you see the thing is gone from me; but if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you; ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me. Therefore, tell me the dream and by that I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof."

The Chaldeans were aghast, and answered the king earnestly, "There is not a man upon earth that can show the king's matter; therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler that has asked such things from any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth; and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

The king became very angry and furious, and he commanded the destruction of all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree went forth, and the officers sought out Daniel and his followers to be slain.

Then Daniel used reason and sense, and spoke to Arioch, the captain of the king's executioners.

"Why is the decree so hasty from the king?" he asked.

Then Arioch explained the matter, for Daniel had not been present with the magicians and Chaldeans. Then Daniel took a brave step. He faced the king in his wrath, and declared that if Nebuchadnezzar would but give him time, he would show the interpretation.

Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar was regretting his hasty decision; at any rate he allowed Daniel to leave him to see what he could do. Daniel went straight home and told his three companions what had happened, and they all prayed to the God of heaven concerning the secret, so that Daniel and his companions should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

That night, the secret was revealed to Daniel, and it came before him like a wonderful picture, and when he waked he kneeled and blessed the God of Heaven.

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are His; He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings, and setteth up kings. . . . He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him. I thank Thee, Thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom

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and might, for Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter."

So Daniel went to Arioch, and said, "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation."

Then Arioch brought Daniel to the court in haste, and said to Nebuchadnezzar, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known unto the king the interpretation."

So Daniel was given his chance.

"There is a God in heaven," said Daniel, "Who revealeth secrets, and maketh known unto King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.

"Thou O king sawest, and behold a great image which stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible.

"His head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass. His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

"Thou sawest a stone, cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, and brake them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

The king must have wondered indeed, as he saw his dream rise before him, and as he studied this young Jewish captive, who spoke so certainly

Then Daniel explained that King Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, that other empires would follow, one of silver, one of iron, one of clay and iron, and therefore weak and divided.

In the days of the iron and clay empire, the God of Heaven would set up a Kingdom which would never be destroyed.

Many people have tried to work out which nations were meant by the different parts of the image, but whichever they were, we can easily guess that the stone that grew and grew is the Kingdom of God, which will spread until one day it fills the whole earth.

The king was so utterly amazed at what he heard that he came

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down from his throne, and fell on his face before Daniel, and worshipped him, and commanded that the Priest of his gods should there and then bring out incense and burn it in honour of Daniel.

"Of a truth," said the king, "your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets!"

The king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

## CHAPTER 3

### FROM HIGH RANK TO A FIERY FURNACE

THE next we hear of Nebuchadnezzar is that he set up an image of gold, sixty cubits high (a cubit varies from eighteen to twenty-five inches). It was probably made of wood and covered with gold, and it was set up near Babylon on a wide plain, where it could be seen from a great distance by a large number of people.

Nebuchadnezzar sent messengers throughout Babylon, to gather the princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counsellors, sheriffs, and the rulers of the provinces, to come to do honour to this golden image.

This list of great people gives us an idea of the king's powers of organisation—and, indeed, Nebuchadnezzar is considered to be more famous for his acts of peace than for his brilliance in war. He took his position as an empire-builder with great seriousness, and tried, according to the ideas of those days, to further the welfare of his peoples.

He was, of course, a tyrant, and cruel to any who opposed him, and was devoted to the worship of his god, Merodach. Indeed, he thought of him as a "great lord" who had appointed him to the empire of the world, and one of his titles ran: "He who pays homage to Merodach."

## FROM HIGH RANK TO A FIERY FURNACE

One of his greatest and most practical acts was the sinking of canals, and the irrigating of the whole Tigris district, so that the land became "like a garden," rich in corn and fruits and flowers.

His outstanding architectural achievement was the erection of the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon," which were considered to be amongst the wonders of the world

It was said that Nebuchadnezzar built them to please his wife, who had come from a land of mountains. They consisted of marvellous pleasure grounds, erected on tiers of arches, rising higher and higher. Great rocks were brought to form artificial mountains, there were vast galleries, and water was raised from the Tigris for fountains and waterfalls, and everywhere there were trees, shrubs, and the choicest plants and flowers. It would be hard to guess how many captives taken from how many different lands were forced to toil in making them. It was probably within view of these gardens that the Golden Image was set up

No mention is made of Daniel in this story, so he may have been in some distant part of the realm on the king's business; but as Shadrach, Meshach and Abcd-nego were rulers of the provinces, they were commanded to attend with the rest.

That massed crowd, gathered on the sunny plain, must have been a very brilliant sight, for all would be wearing festive clothes, and the sun would burnish the gold of the mighty image to marvellous splendour. They knew that they had come to the dedication of this Image, and now the Heralds made their proclamation, as loudly as they could:

"To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the Golden Image that Nebuchadnezzar hath set up; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

What a burst of speech in the scores of different languages there must have been, as the Herald ceased. It is probable that the command was repeated in several languages, so that none could make excuse that he had not understood.

We know well enough what such a command meant to the

## FROM HIGH RANK TO A FIERY FURNACE

three young Jews, as they looked into one another's eyes. Perhaps they gripped one another's hands as they came to the instant decision that they would die rather than fall down and worship this Image. Clearly the servants of Jehovah the Invisible, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, could not bow down before this Image.

But hark! The music bursts forth, and the whole massed crowd sinks down like corn in a wind, in uttermost obedience to the king.

No—not quite all!

Three young men still stand upright, conspicuous in their official robes. They are noticed, and some of the Chaldeans, jealous of the favours which Nebuchadnezzar had shown to these exiled Jews, hurried off to the king, and made their explanation.

"There are certain Jews," they said, "whom thou hast set over the affairs of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have not obeyed thee. They serve not thy gods, nor worship the Golden Image which thou hast set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury, commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego should be brought before him.

"Is it true," he cried to them, "that ye do not serve my gods, nor worship the Golden Image which I have set up? Now, if ye be ready, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the Image that I have made, well; but if not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the burning fiery furnace, and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

The king's taunt at Jehovah must have strengthened the resolution of the young Jews as nothing else could have done, and they answered the king who had been so kind to them with quiet respect.

"O Nebuchadnezzar," they said, "we have no need to answer thee in this matter. Behold our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the Golden Image which thou hast set up."



## FROM HIGH RANK TO A FIERY FURNACE

Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and his face darkened against his young servants. He commanded forthwith that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. They were bound in their clothes and their turbans, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Therefore, because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

And these three men fell down bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was astonished, and rose up in haste, and said to his counsellors, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?"

"True, O king!" they replied.

"Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

Then the king came near the door of the furnace and cried, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come hither."

Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth from the midst of the fire.

And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, nor was the smell of fire upon them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar cried aloud, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God.

"Therefore I make a decree that every people, nation, and language, which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort."

## FROM HIGH RANK TO A FIERY FURNACE

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the province of Babylon.

### CHAPTER 4

#### THE FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR

A CERTAIN king named Belshazzar made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and he ordered the silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the Temple at Jerusalem to be brought out, so that the feasters might drink from them. So men and women drank wine, and praised their gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, iron, wood, and stone.

But suddenly as they were feasting and rioting there appeared the fingers of a man's hand. The fingers wrote on the plaister of the wall, and the king himself saw the hand that wrote.

The king was startled and terror-stricken, and he trembled and his knees knocked together. He called in the astrologers, the Chaldeans and the soothsayers, and said, "Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed in purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall become the third ruler in the land."

But the trouble was that the writing was in an unknown language, and none of the wise men could read it nor interpret it.

King Belshazzar became still more troubled and excited, and a report reached the Queen as to what was happening in the banquet-house.

The Queen had taken no part in the feast, but now she entered, and said, "O king, live for ever; let not thy thoughts trouble thee nor thy countenance turn pale. There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father, light and understanding and wisdom, like unto the wisdom of the gods, was found in him, whom the King Nebuchadnezzar made master of the magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans.

"Now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation."

So Daniel was called and the king said eagerly, "Art thou that

## THE FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR

**Daniel**, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom my father brought out of Judah? I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.

"If thou canst read the writing and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed in purple, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom."

But Daniel answered gravely, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king and make known the interpretation."

There was, we may be sure, no more feasting, and all turned to listen to what Daniel had said, and the queen waited confidently, for she had learnt to believe in this grave and earnest Jew.

In front of this despotic king, who could have slain him in an instant, Daniel spoke out the truth as unfolded to him by God.

"Thou hast, O king, lifted thyself up against the Lord of heaven, and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and drunk wine from them. Thou hast praised the gods of silver, gold, brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and to Whom all thy ways belong hast thou not glorified."

The writing hand had disappeared but the inscription remained, and Daniel read it aloud.

"Mene; Mene; Tekel; Percs.

"*Mene*. God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it.

"*Tekel*. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found to be short weight.

"*Percs*. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and the Persians."

The warning was clear enough, but the king was true to his promise. They clothed Daniel in purple, and put a gold chain about his neck, and proclaimed him as the third ruler in the land.

In our next story we shall find that Babylon had passed into the hands of the Persians and Medes.

## DANIEL FACES THE LIONS

### CHAPTER 5

#### DANIEL FACES THE LIONS

DANIEL, no longer a young man, was highly respected at the court of a king named Darius, who was probably a vassal king. He was honest and his task was to make sure that the king's treasury was not robbed of the taxes. Indeed the news passed round that Darius was thinking of setting Daniel over the whole realm.

This rumour roused the jealousy of certain of the nobles, and they tried to think of some way of lowering him in the eyes of his royal master.

But, alas for them, they could find no fault in Daniel, for he was faithful, and ruled so wisely that all could see that the realm prospered under him. Yet as they consulted together, they decided that there was just a chance that they might put Daniel in the wrong over his devotion to his God. For Daniel worshipped Jehovah quite openly, and took no part in the worship of the court.

So they worked out a clever conspiracy.

It would have been unwise and even dangerous to accuse Daniel directly to the king; but as they knew that Darius was easily flattered, they came to him with a very wily proposal.

"King Darius, live for ever!" they began. "All the presidents, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

"Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."

They were clever enough not to mention Daniel nor Daniel's God, and, little knowing what he was doing, the king signed the writing and the decree.

But when Daniel knew that the writing was signed he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God as was his daily habit.

## DANIEL FACES THE LIONS

Daniel's window was open towards the West, where his beloved Jerusalem stood, and any one passing the house could see what he was doing. The nobles were anxious to know whether Daniel would now go on praying and fall into the trap. So those who had set the conspiracy going, came together, and watched to see what Daniel would do.

Yes, there he was, kneeling by the window, with hands outstretched in prayer to his God.

These men were delighted, for Daniel would now be deposed from his high position, and probably slain, and one of them would be promoted to his place.

So they hurried off to the king.

"Hast thou not signed a decree, O king," they said, "that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?"

"The thing is true," said the king, "according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."

Then they answered triumphantly, "Know then, O king, that Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, obeys not thee, O king, nor the decree which thou hast signed; but maketh his petition three times every day."

But the king, to the disappointment of these men, showed no anger against Daniel. He was, indeed, fiercely displeased at his own folly in having allowed himself to be persuaded to sign such a decree. He set his heart upon delivering Daniel, and all that day, until the sun went down, he tried to think out some means of saving his faithful and trusted servant. The schemers spent an anxious day, yet they felt sure that the king would never dare to break a signed decree.

Daniel was the only one who was not anxious, and they probably watched him as he prayed publicly at noon even though he might be thrown to the lions before nightfall.

So the schemers went to the king and said, "Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed." The king knew only too well that his princes spoke the truth. There was nothing for it but to give the command that Daniel should be thrown to the lions.

## DANIEL FACES THE LIONS

Yet this heathen king said a strange thing to his servant Daniel. "Thy God, Whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee."

Lions were kept in Babylon, having been either captured specially, or sent in as tribute; for lion-hunting was a great game in those days, and the kings took their pleasure in having lions brought in cages to the open country, where they were let loose and hunted to death.

In the British Museum we can see such sport, even the kind of cages used, and the poor lions, savage with hunger, or thrust through with darts.

This delivery of Daniel over to the lions was a public act, done in the sight of the princes, the court, and the people.

Many pictures have been painted of Daniel in the den of lions, but we do not know exactly what the den was like. Clearly, however, it had a "mouth" upon which a great stone was laid, and the sides probably sloped to the bottom of the den.

We can imagine how dignified Daniel would look, as he stood waiting for the fatal moment, and with what kindness he bowed his farewell to the distracted king. For Daniel knew perfectly well that this doom had come upon him through the jealousy of certain princes who had persuaded the rest.

The king sealed the stone with the royal signet, and with the signet of his lords, so as to make sure that no one tampered with it or tried to lift it to release Daniel.

What was happening in that den? Who could say? The princes had won their way. The king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; he allowed no music to be played before him as was his custom, and his sleep went from him.

And what of Daniel?

Daniel was so bent upon doing the will of his God, that he was utterly fearless. Though he found himself amongst a number of hungry lions, he wished them no harm, and the savage beasts knew this by instinct. A strange peace filled that dark den. Any moment a lion might growl and spring, yet no lion sprang. For an Angel of God stayed beside Daniel all through the night, and it seemed as though the lions knew that, too.

At day-break the king rose, and went in haste unto the den of

## DANIEL FACES THE LIONS

lions. And when he came to the den he cried with a lamentable voice to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, Whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"

Then Daniel replied, "O king, live for ever! My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me; for before Him innocency was found in me, and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

And the king commanded, and they brought those men that had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the dens of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Then king Darius wrote unto all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

"Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end.

"He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, Who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."





## Part Twenty-One

### CHAPTER I

#### THE AMAZING PROCLAMATION

**J**ERUSALEM was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 588 B.C., and Nebuchadnezzar died in 561 B.C. Babylon was conquered by Cyrus the Persian in 538 B.C.

As we know, the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom had been carried away captive by the Assyrians, and lost amidst the races amongst which they were sent. But the Jews whom Nebuchadnezzar carried off, principally descended from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, were different. They kept themselves as a separate nation, and never became Chaldeans, Babylonians, or Persians.

From now onwards we must not think of the Jews as a small crowd of people belonging to Canaan, but as a continually growing race. Some were settled in Egypt, and some in Mesopotamia.

Abraham was called out from the Tigris district, and now his descendants had lived there as captives for about seventy years, and the time was arriving when they were once more to return to Jerusalem.

The Jews in Babylonia had found in the Chaldeans a people of the same Semitic race as themselves. Many of them had traded



## THE AMAZING PROCLAMATION

and made money. Some had been exalted to high positions, and the learned amongst them had turned their attention to the study and compilation and re-copying of their sacred books. The Chaldeans were very keen upon their own libraries and collections of ancient manuscripts, and the Jews, no doubt, learned a great deal from them.

But we must realize that the days of idol-worship were now over. The Jews in their exile were turning once again to Jehovah, the God Invisible, and their finest leaders were concentrating upon a patient study of the Jewish writings.

Not only so, but it was impossible for them to offer sacrifices to Jehovah away from Jerusalem, so they suffered intensely in their exile.

Here is part of a psalm which one of them wrote:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

"We hanged our harps upon the willow trees, for there those that carried us away required of us a song, saying: 'Sing us one of the Songs of Zion.'

"How shall we sing Jehovah's songs in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill."

But Jeremiah had told them that if they turned back in their hearts to Jehovah they would certainly see Jerusalem again, and when Babylon was conquered by Cyrus the Persian, a thrill of hope must have passed through the hearts of these homesick Jews.

Would the new reign mean good news for them?

The immensely important fact was that Cyrus the Persian was not a Semite. He was an Aryan, of the same stock as the western Greeks and Romans. His language was different and his religion was totally unlike the Babylonish idol-worship.

The Persians did not themselves worship numbers of idols, and the great historian Herodotus says of them, "They have no images of their gods, no temples, no altars, and consider the use of them as a sign of folly."

The Jews naturally hailed Cyrus as a liberator and a benefactor, and a Greek writer has called him a "just and gentle prince."

We shall therefore understand that he was at once interested in this colony of exiles whom he found in Babylon, who showed

## THE AMAZING PROCLAMATION

such wisdom and intelligence, and who refused to worship "any graven image or likeness of anything that is in heaven or earth or under the earth."

Cyrus also knew that the once prosperous strip of country west of the river Jordan, with its coast line on the Great Sea, was a highway from Egypt to the north, and was badly in need of attention. Its capital, Jerusalem, was wrecked, and its Temple was in ruins.

Why should not these able and industrious Jews return to their own land, and revive the worship of their Invisible God?

So it came about that in the very first year of the king's reign Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to make a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and to put it into writing:

"Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia. Jehovah, God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

"Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem and build the house of Jehovah God of Israel; He is the God which is in Jerusalem."

Cyrus did not compel any unwilling Jews to return; but he asked those who stayed in Babylon to help those who went to Jerusalem, with gold, silver, cattle, and other free-will offerings.

We shall notice that many of the Jews were prosperous and able to contribute to the scheme, and at this time many remained in Babylon, and became known as the Babylonian Jews, and they kept in touch with their fellow countrymen who began to settle in Judæa.

The heads of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, together with certain priests and Levites, whose spirits Jehovah had stirred, were filled with joy, and they determined to carry out the king's suggestion. Their great chance, promised by Jeremiah, had come; for though they had been studying the Law, they could not carry out all the directions until they had a Temple once more.

But Cyrus did more than make a proclamation. He collected from the idol temple the vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple, and his treasurer, Mithredath, numbered them, and handed them over to a Prince of Judah, named Sheshbazzar.

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Here is a list of them:

Thirty dishes of gold, a thousand dishes of silver, nine and twenty knives, thirty basins of gold, four hundred and ten basins of a second sort, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these were brought safely from Babylon to Jerusalem by Sheshbazzar.

In the Bible there are lists of the exiles who returned, over forty-two thousand, besides horses, mules, camels, and asses. But it is not quite clear as to whether all these set forth in the first caravan, or whether some who came later are included. We are sure, however, that a considerable population of Jews remained in Babylon, and we hear of them later as sending money to help in the work being done by the Jerusalem Jews.

There must have been great excitement amongst the Jews in Babylon when the caravan set forth. The journey would take about four months, for they could not travel fast. We do not know the route, but they may have gone north, and then south again, as Abraham went, and how eagerly the older people would point out to the children the landmarks, as at last they reached their own land.

And, best of all, there was Jerusalem, the city of their longings and hopes. Certainly it was a ruin, but the site was there, and had they not come to rebuild, and to make Jerusalem once more worthy of their nation and of Jehovah?

On seeing all that was to be done, the chiefs of the fathers handed over large sums of gold and silver to help on the work, and to provide vestments for the priests, so that the service might begin as soon as possible.

## CHAPTER 2

### DIFFICULTIES

It is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah that we get some of the history of how the Jews rebuilt the Temple and the Walls of Jerusalem. But there are long gaps in the narrative, so that we cannot know all that happened.

## DIFFICULTIES

Three prophets also tell us something, and their names are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The returned exiles gathered at once to consider how they might start the worship of Jehovah, according to the Law. But as there was no Temple, the best they could do was to build an altar, probably on the site of the old altar of Solomon. Here they offered regular sacrifices, and at least they could keep the Feast of Tabernacles, or Tents. This was the Feast to remind them that once they lived in tents in the wilderness. Every household built a booth, and they all lived in the open air during the days of the Feast, and we can imagine how greatly the boys and girls enjoyed this camping out.

It was about a year before they actually started building the Temple. But arrangements were made with the people of Tyre and Sidon to bring cedar trees on rafts down to Joppa, just as had been done in the days of Solomon, and masons and joiners were hired

At last there came a wonderful day when the builders were prepared to lay the foundations of the Temple, and the priests and the Levites appeared in their robes, with trumpets and instruments of music, and there was singing from the Psalms.

"Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever!"

When all the people standing round heard the sacred music once again, they shouted with a great shout, and praised Jehovah because the foundation of His house was now laid.

It was a day of great joy, but also of great sadness, for we read:

"Many of the Priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were old men, who had seen the first Temple, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted loud for joy.

"So that the people could not distinguish the noise of joy from the noise of weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off."

We must not imagine that when the exiles returned they found the land waste and empty. There were Jews who had escaped being carried away by Nebuchadnezzar settled round Jerusalem, and also in the country and small towns round about.

## DIFFICULTIES

Also what about the Northern Kingdom, with its capital, Samaria?

It is true that those of the Northern Kingdom who were carried off by the Assyrians have been lost sight of, but some still remained in Canaan. Mixed with them was a population sent by the Assyrians to help to occupy the land.

These mixed races had wished to worship the "god of the land," and so it came about that these Samaritans, as we must call them, worshipped Jehovah, but not in the same way as the Jews. They were not so strict in their worship, and they were jealous of the exiles returned to Jerusalem, for they believed that Samaria was as worthy a city as Jerusalem in which to worship Jehovah.

We do not know all the story, but from the beginning these Samaritans are described as the "enemies" of Judah and Benjamin.

They heard of the gladness in Jerusalem, and that this House of Jehovah was about to be built, and they came to Zerubbabel, the Jewish leader, with what seems to us to be a friendly proposition.

"Let us build with you," they said, "for we seek your God as ye do, and we have done sacrifice to Him, since the days when the King of Assyria brought us up hither."

But Zerubbabel answered, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, God of Israel, as King Cyrus hath commanded us."

It is not possible for us to know all the reasons which made Zerubbabel give this answer, and refuse the co-operation of the Samaritans. He may have thought that the offer was not genuine, and was only a trick; but it seems, on the face of it, a pity that no effort was made to work together in a friendly way, for Samaria was but a short distance away.

But so it was, and the reply cost the Jews dearly. From that time forward, right through the reign of Cyrus and into the reign of Darius, the Samaritans hindered the work and became indeed the "enemies" of the Jews.

This enmity was kept up for over five hundred years, as we shall see when we travel on into the time of Jesus of Nazareth.

## THE TEMPLE IS COMPLETED

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE TEMPLE IS COMPLETED

THE Samaritans managed to stop the work on the Temple, and here we have a gap in the story of about fifteen years.

We can, however, now learn something from the prophet Haggai. There had evidently been a famine, and the people were distressed, and Haggai breaks out upon them that they have been unfaithful to Jehovah in not getting on with the re-building of the Temple.

"Thus speaketh Jehovah of Hosts, saying, 'This people saith the time is not come that Jehovah's house should be built. Is it time for you, O ye that dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, consider your ways.'"

So the leaders listened to the voice of Jehovah through Haggai, and they and the people began once again to rebuild the ruined Temple.

Cyrus was dead, and Darius was king of Persia and Babylonia, and it came about that a Persian official, or Satrap, from the west of the Euphrates, arrived in Jerusalem, and noticed at once the work that was going on.

"Who," said he, "hath commanded you to build this house and to make up this wall?"

Mercifully, the Satrap was persuaded not to hinder the work until he had received orders from Darius, so he wrote a letter to the king, that he might get his orders as to what to do. Here is part of the letter:

"Unto Darius the king, all peace.

"Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judæa, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast and prospereth in their hands.

"Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, 'Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?' We asked their names also, to certify thee.

"And thus they returned an answer to us, saying, 'We are

## THE TEMPLE IS COMPLETED

**servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build this house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up. But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon.**

**"But in the first year of Cyrus, the king of Babylon, this same Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. And the vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the Temple, these did the king take out of the Temple of Babylon, and deliver unto one, whom he had made governor, whose name was Sheshbazzar, and said unto him, 'Take these vessels, go, carry them into the Temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in that place.'"**

The letter asked that King Darius should have a search made, to look among the rolls, to see if this were all true.

A search was made, and Darius was so satisfied that the Jews had not deceived him that he commanded the Satrap not to interfere with the building of the Temple, but to help them in every way he could, and even to supply them with more money for the work.

Thus it was that the Temple was completed, but the walls of the city were still broken down.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

**VERY** few of the stories in the Bible are told by the actual men and women who took part in them, but Nehemiah tells what happened to himself, and we are glad.

The Temple had, it is true, been rebuilt, but Jerusalem was still in a ruinous state, for the wall was broken down. We must now pass across another gap to about ninety years after the first party of exiles had returned at the command of Cyrus, and this brings us to 445 B.C.

Darius II was king of Persia and Babylon, and Nehemiah,

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who was a Jew, was his cup-bearer, which is a very important office. The cup-bearer had to drink or taste what was offered to the king in case of poison, and was indeed a confidential servant in whom the king could trust.

There were many Jews in Babylon, and news was constantly passing between the Jews in Jerusalem and their richer kinsmen in Babylon.

While Nehemiah was in attendance upon the king in Shushan, the palace, some of the Judeans brought a sad story of the condition of things in Jerusalem, and Nehemiah says:

"It came to pass when I heard these words that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed unto the God of Heaven, and said:

"I beseech thee, O Jehovah, God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments . . . Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commanded Thy servant Moses, saying: 'If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations; but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost parts of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.'"

Then Nehemiah knew that he must go on duty to attend the king, and he added, "Prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of the king." For I was the king's cup-bearer.

"And it came to pass that I took up the wine and gave it unto the king. Now, I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.

"Therefore the king said unto me:

"Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart.'

"Then I was very sore afraid, and said unto the king, 'Let the king live for ever; why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?'

"Then the king said unto me:

"For what dost thou make request?'

"So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king:



## THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

“ ‘ If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, I would have thee send me to Jerusalem that I may build it.’

“The king asked me, his queen also sitting beside him:

“ ‘ For how long shall thy journey be, and when wilt thou return.’

“So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

“Moreover, I said unto the king, ‘ If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may let me pass till I come into Judah. And a letter unto Asaph, the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace, and for the walls of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into.’

“And the king granted me, thanks to the good hand of my God upon me.

“Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king’s letters. Now, the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me ”

It is clear from the story that one of the troubles at Jerusalem was that there were those who had made up their minds that Jerusalem should not be strengthened, and that the Jews should not make a success of their return from exile.

Amongst these were two men named Sanballat and Tobiah, and evidently there was a great stir in Jerusalem when Nehemiah arrived with his escort. Sanballat, who was governor of Samaria, was very grieved that a man had come to seek the welfare of the Children of Israel.

Now, after Nehemiah had been in Jerusalem for three days he decided that he would go out secretly, riding on an ass, and see for himself the condition of the broken wall. Let him give his own account of his night’s adventure.

“And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

“And I went out by night, by the gate of the valley, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the king’s

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pool. but there was no room for the beast that was under me to pass.

"Then I went up by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

"And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did, neither had I, as yet, told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nobles, rulers, nor to the rest that did the work."

But when Nehemiah revealed his design to build the walls, the Jews were delighted to follow such a leader, and they said, "Let us rise up and build!"

Nehemiah goes on to tell us, "But when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, 'What is this thing that ye will do? Will ye rebel against the king?'

"Then I answered them, 'The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we, His servants, will arise and build; but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.'"

Nehemiah was as determined as Zerubbabel had been not to have any dealings with the mixed races of the Samaritans, and once again the Samaritans bent all their powers to hinder the work.

Nehemiah was a good organizer, and he divided the wall area into sections, and made each set of workers responsible for one section; and very soon all were hard at work, some measuring and deciding upon the height and thickness of the new wall, some picking out the best stones from the fallen masonry, others preparing the mortar, while women and children would do their part in supplying the workers with food and drink.

But Nehemiah shall tell us what happened next:

"When Sanballat heard that we build the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

"And he spake before his brethren and the army in Samaria, and said, 'What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?'

"Now, Tobiah, the Ammonite was by him, and he said, 'Even that which they build, if a fox or jackal go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.'

## THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

"Hear, O our God, for we are despised; and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity.

"So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work.

"But it came to pass that when Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Arabians and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were rising and the breaches began to be stopped, they were very wroth, and conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to hinder it.

"Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night.

"And our people of Judah said, 'The strength of the labourers is wearing away, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.'

"Our adversaries said, 'They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them and cause the work to cease.' "

From that time onwards half of the men built, and half stood to arms, and Nehemiah kept a sharp look-out, with a trumpeter by his side, and he tells us.

"And I said unto the nobles, 'The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one from another. In what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, hasten thither, for our God shall fight for us'

"So we laboured in the work, and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning, until the stars appeared "

Now, when at last the wall was completed, though the gates were not yet set up, Sanballat sent for Nehemiah, asking him to meet him in a village near by.

But Nehemiah guessed his intention and he tells us:

"They thought to do me mischief, and I sent messengers unto them saying, 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?'

"Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort, and I answered them after the same manner."

Then Sanballat sent the fifth time, with an open letter accusing

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Nehemiah of wanting to build the wall, in order that he might fight against Darius and become the Jewish king himself.

"Come now, therefore," said Sanballat, "and let us take counsel together."

But Nehemiah answered shrewdly:

"There are no such things done as thou sayest; thou pretendest them in thine own heart."

Sanballat's last trick was to send a false prophet to Nehemiah, to persuade him that his life was in danger and that he ought to take refuge in the Temple. But Nehemiah answered:

"Should such a man as I flee? And who is there that, being as I am, would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in."

"And lo, I perceived that God had not sent him. For Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him, that I might be afraid and sin, and they might be able to reproach me."

So at last Nehemiah was able to report exultantly,

"So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul (September), in fifty and two days.

"And it came to pass that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."

## CHAPTER 5

### EZRA'S STORY

WE must now face another gap of about thirty years.

About the year 398 B.C., in the reign of Artaxerxes II, king of Persia, a man was living in Babylon named Ezra.

He was descended from Aaron, and was a Scribe—very learned in the Law of Moses, and anxious to teach his people to understand the will of Jehovah and to do it.

It came into his heart that he would like to go to Jerusalem and see how things were going, and his master, Artaxerxes II, was most friendly to the idea—as we shall see by the decree that

## EZRA'S STORY

Artaxerxes issued (and we shall remember that as a Persian he was in sympathy with the worship of Jehovah).

"Artaxerxes king of kings unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace and greeting.

"I make a decree, and all they of the people of Israel in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

"Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king and of his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of the God which is in thine hand

"And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem.

"And all the silver and gold, that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the free-will offerings of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem.

"That thou mayest buy speedily with this money, bullocks, rams, lambs with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of your God

"And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do, after the will of your God.

"The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem.

"And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, draw from the king's treasure house.

"And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil and salt, without prescribing how much.

"Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done diligently for the God of heaven, for why should there be displeasure against the realm of the king and his sons?

"Also we decree that it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute or custom upon such as minister to the house of God.

## EZRA'S STORY

"And thou Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God which is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, that may judge the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God, and teach them that know them not.

"And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be by death, banishment, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment."

So the great king's decree ran, and Ezra, when he had read it exclaimed:

"Blessed be Jehovah, the God of our fathers, which hast put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem; and hath extended mercy unto me before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes.

"And I was strengthened as the hand of Jehovah my God was upon me; and I gathered out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

"And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava, and there abode we in tents three days.

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might seek of our God the right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

"For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, 'The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him. but His power and wrath is against all them that forsake Him!'

"So we fasted and besought our God for this, and He was entreated of us."

There were about twelve hundred men, besides women and children, with cattle and sheep, and they had, of course to travel very slowly. Travelling was always dangerous, and in this case it must have been specially so, for the treasure they were carrying would be a temptation to raiders and robbers.

But in all solemnity the members of the caravan threw themselves upon the care of God; and God knew this, and saw their faith, and took charge of them right to Jerusalem.

Nothing was lost, and everything was delivered safely into the hands of the Temple authorities.

## EZRA'S STORY

What a welcome these weary travellers must have received from their friends! And we are sure that the Jerusalem Jews, men and women, boys and girls, must have shared in offering hospitality, and making them feel comfortable and at home.

As for the leaders, they talked long and earnestly, for all was not going well in the land, and a great attempt was now made to establish a regular government, and to teach and educate the people in the law of Jehovah. We soon begin to hear of synagogues being set up in the smaller towns, where, though sacrifices were only offered at Jerusalem, the people could attend religious services and be taught the law.

The Jews were distinguished for their love of education, and the fathers had always taken it as a duty to teach their children the past history of the race, and that is partly how it came about that before writing was general, the old stories were handed down.

But at last schools could be established, and every effort was made to create a regular system of Jewish religion.

That parts of this religion became hard and narrow, we shall discover when we come to the times of Jesus of Nazareth; but all the world owes a debt to such men as Nehemiah, Ezra, the prophets, and unknown priests and Levites who kept it alive.

The Temple was now made beautiful with some of the treasures of Babylon; but the Holy Place, the innermost shrine of all, was empty. The Ark, with its cherubim, had gone, together with the tablets of stone, and the tradition is that they were buried in a secret place for safety by the prophet Jeremiah.

Modern explorers could not experience a bigger thrill than by finding the Sacred Ark!

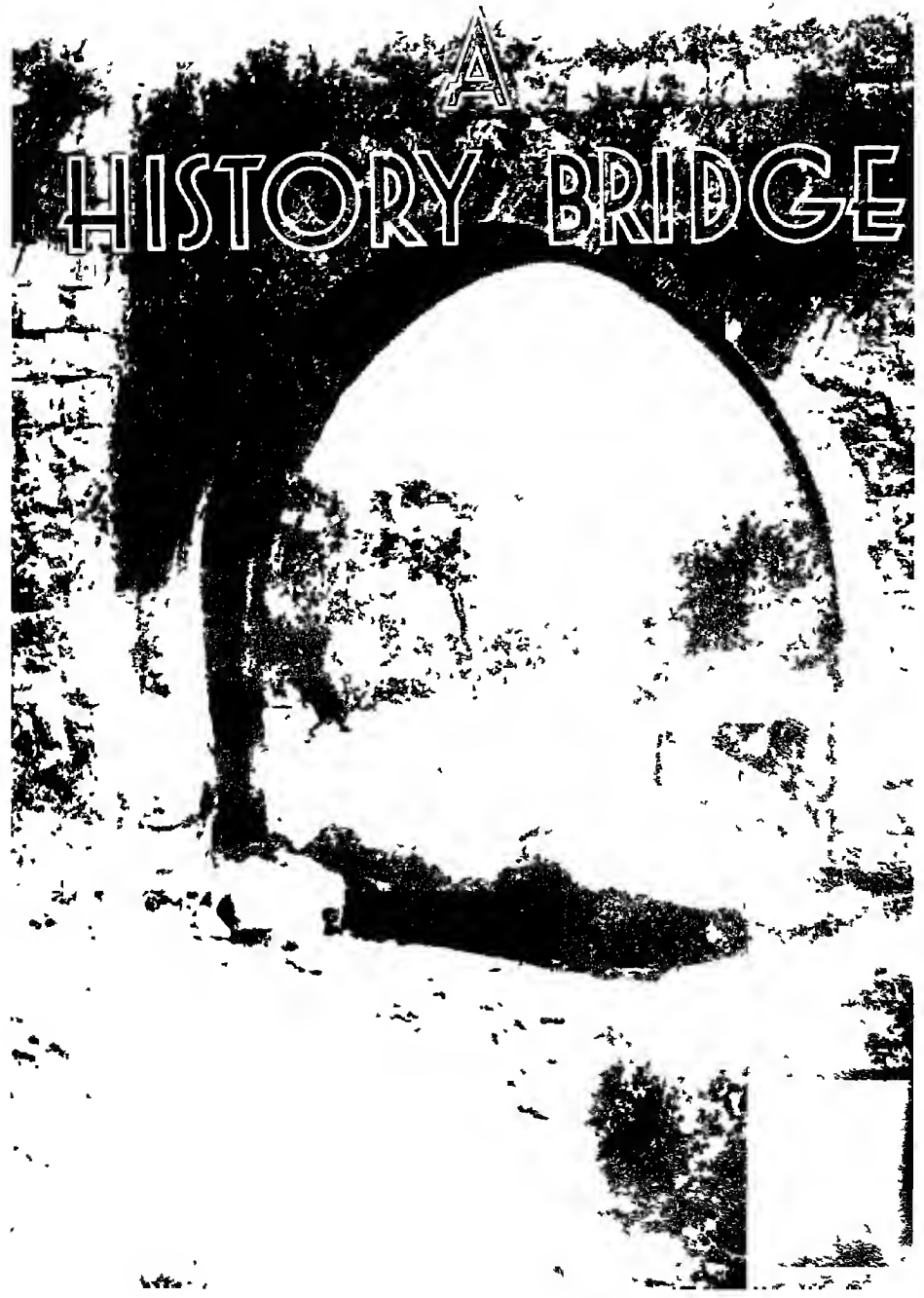
But though the Ark was gone, Jehovah was still with His people, helping them and training them until the day should come when He would send His own Son down into the world.

For this day we must wait about four hundred years, and there is no pathway in the Bible along which we can walk.

So before we hear the angels singing above the hills in Bethlehem, we will pass across "a history bridge," which will help us to understand what was happening in Palestine and Jerusalem and the wide world, between the times when what we call the Old Testament ends and the New Testament begins.

A

# HISTORY BRIDGE









## CHAPTER I

### NEW CONDITIONS

**I**T is puzzling, when we have finished our journey with Nehemiah and Ezra and the people of Jerusalem, to find that the new road over which we are to travel runs through quite a different kind of world, even though many of the old names will be familiar.

Jerusalem was now a city of wealth and importance, with a gorgeous Temple, and the centre of great religious services. Synagogues were in most towns, the country was crowded with populations of many different races, from Galilee in the north to the far south; the Romans were ruling the known world, and Herod the Great, who was of the race of Edom or Esau, was on the throne.

What has happened?

First, we must be very clear that it was only a small proportion of Jews who returned to Palestine in the days of Cyrus, King of Persia, in 537 B.C. It has been said that the Jewish population in Babylonia was like a second Palestine, and so many Jews were in Egypt that it became one of the principal centres of Jewish learning. Many Jews were far happier in these foreign lands, where they could trade and enjoy high culture, and give themselves to study, and have their children highly educated.

## NEW CONDITIONS

So long as the Persians ruled, the Jews were protected, for the Persians had much in common with them, especially in the matter of idol-worship. We never hear now of the Jews worshipping such gods as Baal or Moloch, and their religious leaders worked with immense perseverance to put into order the ancient manuscripts of the written law, and also to collect together the Laws which had passed from father to son, and were known as the Oral Law.

Much of this work was excellent and valuable, but there crept in a hardness and narrow-mindedness which spoiled some of it. Ideas were taught which were according to man's mind, and not always according to God's.

It is important for us to understand this, or we shall soon be puzzled at the reproofs which Jesus gave to the scribes and Pharisees and religious leaders, when He blamed them for misleading the people by teaching them petty rules and hard regulations, almost impossible to carry out, and forgetting the true and beautiful spirit of their God and Father.

## CHAPTER 2

### UNDER THE GREEKS

BETWEEN the years 333 B.C. and 323 B.C., Alexander the Great, a Greek, swept aside the Persians and established a very different rule.

Syria, which included Palestine, was part of the Persian Empire, and having captured the northern cities of Damascus and Tyre, Alexander marched against Jerusalem.

He intended to punish Jerusalem severely for having supported the Persians against him. Jaddua, the High Priest, had boldly declared that he had given his oath not to bear arms against Darius III, and that so long as the Persian king lived, he could not break it.

Now Jaddua, as soon as he heard that King Alexander was on the road, was in agony and dread, and Josephus, the Jewish Historian, tells us his view of the incident.

## UNDER THE GREEKS

Jaddua could not defend himself by arms, but he ordered the people to pray to God and offer sacrifices, that they might be delivered from this fearful danger.

Whereupon God warned Jaddua in a dream that he was to open the City gates courageously. The ordinary priests were to appear in white garments, but the High Priest was to wear his official robes. He was not to have a dread in his heart of this mighty conqueror, Alexander the Great.

When Jaddua waked from sleep he rejoiced greatly, and obeyed the dream-command. As soon as he knew that Alexander was nearing the City, he led out the procession of priests and masses of the citizens.

Alexander was amazed. This procession was different from any he had ever seen, and the Phoenicians and Chaldeans who followed him were astonished, for they had been expecting to plunder Jerusalem, and to torture the High Priest to death.

Yet when Alexander looked on this brave leader, in his purple and gold robes, the name of God emblazoned in gold on his mitre, he was so awed that he saluted Jaddua, and adored the name on the mitre. And when the Jews saw this, they broke out in cries of acclamation for Alexander, and surrounded him.

The King of Syria and the others were so amazed that they thought that Alexander had gone mad.

"How," asked one of them, "does it happen that while all others adore thee, thou dost adore the High Priest of the Jews?"

"I do not adore the High Priest," replied Alexander, "but that God Who has honoured him with his High Priesthood."

Alexander believed that he had some time ago seen in a dream this very High Priest, who had offered him success against the Persians, but this does not seem very likely.

But now the King took Jaddua by the hand, and, surrounded by the rejoicing crowd, they entered Jerusalem.

Alexander offered sacrifices at the Temple, and gave the Jews valuable privileges.

The coming of the Greeks brought the East and West together, and it was not long before the Greek language, Greek ideas, and Greek manners and customs spread.

It was Alexander's policy to establish Greek settlements, either

## UNDER THE GREEKS

on land where no city had been before, or in such cities as Damascus, Samaria, Gaza, which will remind us of Samson, and even Beth-shan, where poor King Saul's body was once exposed.

In the Greek cities, there was Greek education in language, literature, sculpture, the drama. There were Greek athletic sports and games, and it soon became fashionable to speak Greek, and to follow Greek ways.

The Greeks worshipped the ancient gods, such as Zeus, Kronos, Poseidon, Pallas Athene, Ares, Artemis. We may know them better by their Roman names; Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Minerva, Mars, Diana. Athens, the capital of Greece, was famous for its marvellous temples, shrines, altars, and statues.

The Jews, highly intelligent, caught the Greek spirit, yet on the whole, they were faithful to their Invisible God, Jehovah, Who needed no image. They spoke the common Syrian language, called Aramaic in their talk; but they used Hebrew in their religious and legal writing. But many Jews also spoke Greek.

In Jerusalem there was no Grecian theatre or gymnasium, until the time of Herod the Great.

But the Greeks were also interested in the Jews, and Alexander settled many Jews in his new City of Alexandria, in Egypt. It was from Alexandria that there came the first Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, which we call the Septuagint.

At the death of Alexander his empire was divided amongst his generals; but though the Jews went through times of difficulty, they were favoured on the whole until the year 170 B.C.

## CHAPTER 3

### ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES, who now came into power, was ambitious and had the nature of a tyrant. He had a passion to dominate, and he was quite determined to force the Greek worship of the gods upon the stubborn Jews.

He took Jerusalem by storm, and spoiled the city. He broke

## ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

down the walls, set houses on fire, and, what was worst of all, he defiled the Temple and even offered swine's flesh on the altar, which was forbidden by the Law of Moses.

Jewish sacrifices were forbidden, and the Jews were not even allowed to keep holy the Sabbath Day. Antiochus built altars to Zeus and other gods in the streets of Jerusalem, and at the doors of the houses, on which incense was burnt. He collected any books on the Law which he could find, and had them destroyed, and ruthlessly slaughtered those who obeyed the Law.

Now, though many of the Jews had been tempted to become Greeks, this new persecution sent them back to their old National faith in Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. With great heroism, they died rather than submit, and starved rather than eat food offered to idols, or swine's flesh.

It came about that there was a Priest named Mattathias, whose heart was filled with grief and indignation at what was happening.

He had five sons, named Johanan, Simon, Judas Maccabæus, Eliezar, and Jonathan.

"Woe is me!" he cried. "Wherefore was I born, to see the destruction of my people and the destruction of the Holy City."

When the officers of Antiochus arrived at a small town, and spoke to Mattathias and his sons in a friendly way, they promised them riches and honours if they would but obey the king. This reminds us of the testing of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego before Nebuchadnezzar.

But Mattathias answered in a loud voice, "If all the nations that are in the king's dominions hearken unto him, to break away from the worship of his fathers, yet will I and my sons walk in the covenant of our fathers. Heaven forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances!"

When a Jew came forward to sacrifice on a heathen altar to the Greek gods, Mattathias, in his anger, slew him, together with the officer from Antiochus. He broke down the altar, and then fled with his sons, to raise the banner of rebellion.

The history of the Maccabees, and their final victory, is told in the First Book of the Maccabees, which is not included in our Bible.

## ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

Judas Maccabæus became the leader, and in a few months he had gathered and trained an army of enthusiastic Jews, who fought their way to victory.

It was Judas Maccabæus who made up his mind that a power greater than the power of the Greeks was coming into the world. The Romans were strengthening themselves in every direction, and he went off to Rome, in order to make an alliance and to offer Jewish support in the struggle against the Greeks.

In the year 165 B.C., in the winter month of Chisleu, a day of great rejoicing was held in Jerusalem. The Temple was cleansed and re-dedicated, and the worship of God was again set free and established.

In the time of Jesus, we read of the "Feast of the Dedication," which was celebrated yearly until Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in A.D. 70.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HASMONÆANS

FROM about 167 B.C. to 60 B.C. the Hasmonæans, as the descendants of Mattathias were called, ruled in Jerusalem. The early members of the family conducted the Jewish affairs with wisdom; but, alas! as the years passed, ambition crept in, and there were quarrels and jealousies, which led to weakness.

The really religious Jews were deeply distressed at the rivalries and cruelties of the later Hasmonæan princes.

As we pass on to 63 B.C., we find a Roman General named Pompey laying siege to Jerusalem. Pompey worked for three months before he could get near enough with his battering rams to force the walls, for the skilled slingers kept him back; but noticing that the Jews never fought on the Sabbath he drew nearer and nearer every Sabbath, and at last he managed to make a breach, through which his soldiers might rush.

Meanwhile, at the Temple the Priests had gone on bravely with their duties, in spite of arrows and stones. But now a strange

## THE HASMONÆANS

thing happened. Pompey entered the sacred Temple, to the great distress of the religious Jews, and examined the treasures, and even pushed his way into the Holy of Holies. He may have wished to see for himself the strange and mysterious God which the Jews worshipped. To his amazement, he found that all was darkness, and the Holy of Holies was empty. There was no idol, and no image of the mighty Jehovah (we shall remember that the Ark of gold with the cherubim had gone long ago, hidden away somewhere, and has never been found to this day.)

Pompey left the Temple just as it was. He refused to plunder any of the treasures and sacred vessels, and would not even rob the treasure chests. He ordered the place to be cleansed of the slain, and that the services should continue as before.

## CHAPTER 5

### HEROD THE GREAT

We shall remember that Abraham's grandson, Esau, founded the race of the Edomites, who were established in the south-east land. For generations the Jews and the Edomites had had struggles, the one race against the other, yet they could not forget that both races were descended from Abraham.

A certain Edomite, or Idumæan, as the Edomites were now called, whose name was Antipater, was made procurator of the province of Idumæa, by the Romans. A procurator was not a king, nor even a high governor, but was a local ruler under the Roman Government.

Herod the Great was Antipater's second son, and was appointed by the Romans as King of Judæa in 47 B.C. He was not a Jew, but he married a beautiful princess named Mariamne, of whom he was passionately fond, and she was a Jewess, a member of the displaced Hasmonæan house. So Herod and Mariamne's children were half Edomites and half Jews.

In Judæa, the people were greatly divided about Herod. Some were proud to have such an able monarch, and others hated the



## HEROD THE GREAT

idea of their king being an Idumæan, and the deeply religious Jews were shocked at all the evil which Herod did.

• Herod was ambitious for grandeur; he rebuilt the Temple, and established a theatre and an amphitheatre for games and shows, which disgusted the religious Jews. He built strong fortresses up and down the land so that he might be secure, and lavished wealth on his own palace. He built Cæsarea, which he named after the Emperor.

But the reign was stained by cruelty and atrocity. Through jealousy he murdered the wife he loved, and her two sons, and the remaining members of the Hasmonæan family. No one who stood in his way had any chance against his power and savage wrath, and even the Emperor Augustus in Rome said that it was better to be Herod's hog than his son.

It was Herod the Great who, in the year 4 B.C., was on the throne. He was dying of a terrible disease which increased his cruel passions. And it is in the year 4 B.C. that we step off our "History-Bridge" and return to that part of the Bible which is called the New Testament.



# THE NEW TESTAMENT







# Part One

## CHAPTER I

### THE FORERUNNER

**W**E shall remember that when Joseph was made ruler in Egypt, men ran before him, calling upon the people to bow down. Absalom, when he rebelled, had forerunners to proclaim him as king. Elijah ran all the way from Mount Carmel to Jezreel before King Ahab's chariot.

A king was coming to Judæa, not of the ambitious house of the Hasmonæans, nor of the cruel house of Herod the Great. The religious Jews looked for a king of whom the prophet Isaiah had written:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful—Counsellor—The Mighty God—the Everlasting Father—the Prince of Peace.”

We have travelled this long journey through the Bible, wondering when that One would be born, in Whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.

We shall not be satisfied with a king like Saul or David, Solomon, or even Hezekiah or Josiah. The king we are expecting must be altogether different from any king we have yet known.

Now, who was to be the forerunner of this King?

It happened that about the year 5 B.C., in the days of Herod, there lived a priest named Zacharias, and his wife Elizabeth. They were both descendants of Aaron, and were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all His commandments and ordinances.

## THE FORERUNNER

They were both growing old, and were disappointed because they had no child. Oftentimes had they prayed that they might be blessed with one.

The duty of Zacharias was to burn incense inside the Temple, while the multitude of worshippers waited outside praying. On one occasion while Zacharias was offering the incense, he noticed an angel standing on the right side of the altar.

He was naturally greatly troubled, and fear fell upon him.

"Fear not, Zacharias," said the angel, "for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, from the day he is born. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

But as Zacharias doubted, the angel answered, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb until the days that these things be performed, because thou believest not my words."

The angel passed out of sight, and the people outside waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the Temple.

And when he came out, he could not speak unto them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision, for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

And so it was that a son was born to Elizabeth and Zacharias, and Elizabeth's neighbours and relatives gathered about her to rejoice with her.

When the time came to name the child, they all thought that he would be called Zacharias after his father, but his mother answered, "Not so; but he shall be called John."

And they said to her, "There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name," and they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

And Zacharias asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John."

And they all marvelled.

## THE FORERUNNER

And Zacharias's tongue was loosed, and he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people . . . to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He swore to our Father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways."

So the child named John was to be the forerunner of a King.

John grew and was strong in his body and strong in his spirit, and he was brought up in lonely places until the time came when he was to announce the King.

## CHAPTER 2

### AN ORDER FROM ROME

A CARPENTER, named Joseph, was compelled by a decree from the Emperor of Rome to leave his shop and his work in the northern town of Nazareth, and take a journey to Bethlehem, in Judah.

The journey was perhaps eighty miles, and Joseph knew that he must spend several days on the road, for he could only go at the walking pace of the ass upon which he had placed his wife, Mary. The ass would also be laden with sleeping-mats, clothes, and provisions.

No one would have guessed, as he saw them tracking along the rough way, that these two belonged to the Royal House of David. Yet so it was. It was just because they belonged by family to Bethlehem that they had to take this journey to have their names registered, in order that Roman taxes might be collected from them.

Bethlehem is very familiar to us by this time, for it was the birthplace of David, the shepherd boy who had kept his father's

## AN ORDER FROM ROME

sheep on the hills round the city more than a thousand years before Joseph and Mary arrived.

After leaving Nazareth, which lies in a fold of the hills, they descended into the Plain of Esdraelon, which is the Greek name for the Valley of Jezreel. Probably they did not go directly south, or they would have had to pass through Samaria, where the people were often unfriendly. So following the valley eastward, the travellers would reach the Jordan, cross the river, and go southward until they crossed again, somewhere near Jericho.

It was a long uphill ride, from about six hundred feet below sea level to three thousand feet above sea level. It was a wild road, often dangerous because of brigands who lay in wait for travellers. But Joseph and Mary were so poor that they were not worth robbing.

Though they were poor, however, they carried with them a wonderful secret: Mary had had a vision, and an angel had told her that she would have a Holy Child, and his name would be called Jesus.

At any time this Holy Child might come, and they were both anxious to reach Bethlehem. They must have looked forward to some kindly householder offering them hospitality; but, alas! other Bethlehemites had arrived to register their names, and no one could take them in. Joseph's last hope was the inn, or caravan.

The Bethlehem caravan was probably a square stone building with a courtyard in the centre, with small rooms or cells built round it. It was into one of these rooms that Joseph had hoped to take Mary, and he must have been vexed when the landlord told him that there was no room at all in the inn, for he could not crowd in any more travellers.

As it was impossible to stay out in the bitter cold of the night, Joseph asked leave to shelter in one of the cattle stalls, or possibly in some cave used as a stall, connected with the inn.

How thankful Joseph was to lead the ass into this humble shelter!

He unloaded the beast, put down the mat, and made Mary as comfortable as he could.

## WHAT THE SHEPHERDS SAW

### CHAPTER 3

#### WHAT THE SHEPHERDS SAW

AND there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

These Bethlehem shepherds knew well how cold the nights could be; yet they were bound to stay out, in case of thieves or wild beasts. True, they were not in danger of bears and lions, as David had been, nearly a thousand years before, but wolves and jackals lurked, and they were awkward enough.

The shepherds were clothed in rough sheepskins, and, as they squatted round their fire, they could look up into the wonderful purple-blue sky, all glittering with stars. The moon, more resplendent and clear in the East even than she is in the West, lighted up the tumbled hillside with a strange, weird light.

What did these shepherds talk about, as they kept their watch? Perhaps of the savage old King Herod, who was said to be dying of a dreadful disease, but who was still dangerous to any who might oppose him. Perhaps they argued about the turbulent Galilæans, who lived round about Nazareth, and who were continually daring the Roman power—and as continually being defeated, sold into slavery, or crucified along the high roads.

Perhaps they grumbled about rich Jews who robbed the poor, of doctors who pretended to heal, of creditors who had those who owed them money thrust into prison.

Perhaps some of them had been at the Synagogue on the Sabbath and had heard readings from the Scriptures, of a King who would one day come to reign in righteousness. This King would be no savage warlike murderer, but a Prince of Peace.

There was plenty of talk in Jerusalem and all over the land of some king, descended from the Royal House of David, who would rescue the country from under the Roman power. Perhaps the shepherds sighed despairingly. Was not Bethlehem crowded with people who were registering to pay more taxes to the Emperor Cæsar Augustus? Such a beautiful dream could not come true; and even if a King of their own did appear, He would certainly



## WHAT THE SHEPHERDS SAW

be murdered by Herod, who had murdered even his own family because they stood in his way.

Yet even as they talked, they were startled dumb.

For, lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

And the Angel said unto them:

"Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger "

And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another:

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

For what could this vision mean?

Far too excited to consider their sheep, the shepherds set off in haste to Bethlehem, which was lying so peacefully under the moonlight. It seemed natural to go to the caravan first, and to find out whether a new-born babe was there.

The door-keeper must have been surprised to be knocked up; but he led them to the stall, and there was Joseph, standing by Mary the young mother, who was leaning over a manger, looking at the baby she had cradled there. The shepherds drew closer, and explained to Joseph and Mary the wonderful vision they had had, which had brought them at that time of night to the caravan.

It was all true, for there was the Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, which means that He was not wearing what we should call "baby clothes" but was swathed round with wide strips of linen, something like bandages.

The shepherds did not stay long, for the morning was breaking, and they went out into the streets and told everyone about the Child. All that heard it wondered at those things that were told them by the shepherds.

And Mary's heart was full of wonder. She, like the shepherds,





## WHAT THE SHEPHERDS SAW

had seen an Angel, who had told her that her Babe would be the Son of the Highest, and would sit on the throne of David, and that His kingdom would never end.

It was impossible for Mary to understand all that the coming of her Baby meant. But we are sure that she and Joseph prayed most earnestly that they might guard and care for the little Child, delivered into their charge.

As for the Babe, He would stretch out His tiny hands, and feel His mother very close to Him, and be very happy.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE BABE IS TAKEN TO THE TEMPLE

JOSEPH soon found a more comfortable place for Mary and the Babe than the cattle stall, and for about six weeks, they lived in quiet peace, in some house in Bethlehem.

Then Joseph and Mary decided that they would like to go to Jerusalem, which was but a few miles away, and present the Babe to God.

It was not necessary for every Jewish mother to take her baby to the Temple; but a first-born Jewish boy was thought of as the special property of God, and it was the custom for a mother, when she could, to offer two young doves to the Priest as a thank-offering.

So the ass was saddled, and Joseph was proud to lead it, with the Mother and Child on its back. How carefully he would go through the bright sunshine to that city of cities, Jerusalem, about which prophets had spoken and psalmists had sung!

As for Mary, her eyes were glad with a solemn joy, for did she not carry in her arms the child whom the Angel had told her must be called JESUS? It was a steep climb to the city, and the Temple crowned the south-eastern corner.

We will speak more of the wonders of the Temple, when Jesus is old enough to walk round it.

## THE BABE IS TAKEN TO THE TEMPLE

Having left the ass, the Galilæan carpenter passed up the marble steps into the pillared cloisters, leading Mary and the Baby through the tumult of the money-changers and the bargain-hunters, and those who were selling sheep, oxen, and doves to those who had come to offer sacrifices. Amidst all this arguing and disputing, no one would notice these humble people, except the trader who sold them the doves.

Having passed through the Royal Cloisters and the Court of the Gentiles, they reached another Court called the Women's Court. By the Temple rules, Mary was not allowed to go any further, and she was about to give up her Babe to Joseph, when they noticed an aged man hurrying towards them

His name was Simeon, and he was known as a good man, full of God's Holy Spirit. God had entrusted to Simeon a secret. He would not die until he had seen the Christ. And now the moment he saw the Baby in Mary's arms, his face lighted up with joy, for he knew that the Christ of God had come.

So he asked Mary to allow him to hold the Baby, and as he did so, he blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel."

This was indeed strange language; for Joseph and Mary had not thought that the Baby was to bring a blessing to the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Then Simeon blessed them, and warned Mary that because of this Child, grief would come down upon her, like a sharp sword, piercing her heart.

Mary could not understand what Simeon meant until long afterwards.

And while he was speaking, a very old woman named Anna came up to the group. She was known as a prophetess, and was about a hundred and six-years old. She knew at once that this Baby was the Christ of God, for Whom she had been waiting and longing. She broke out in praises to God, and spoke to her friends, and told them quite confidently that this Baby was indeed the Christ.

After Joseph had presented the Child to the Priest, and offered

## THE BABE IS TAKEN TO THE TEMPLE

the doves, the little family returned to Bethlehem, intending to go home to Nazareth. But before the journey to Nazareth could take place, something very serious happened.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE WISE MEN

Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, in the days of Herod the king, there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His rising Star in the East, and are come to worship Him."

Many legends have gathered round this simple statement. There were three wise men. They were kings. The Venerable Bede, an English Churchman of the seventh century, tells us their names and what they were like. Melchior was an old man with a white beard, Caspar was a ruddy youth, Balthaser was dark, in the prime of manhood.

All that we know from the Bible is that they were "Wise Men from the East."

From history, however, we can learn that in the world at that time there was a great expectation of some Deliverer—some one who would appear, to rescue the nations from misery. "Wise Men," or astrologers, studied the stars, and by their movements they believed that they could foretell the future.

About this date, there appeared in the sky a bright light, formed by the planets Jupiter and Saturn moving very close together. This may have been the Star which the Wise Men saw, which rose in the east, and travelled westward.

But whatever the star was, it was so wonderful that it set the Wise Men travelling westward from the east, and whether they came from Persia, India, or elsewhere, we do not know.

It was also common talk that the coming Deliverer would be King of the Jews, for the Jews were known in many lands, and were respected for their devotion to their God Invisible. So the immediate thought of the Wise Men was to travel to Jerusalem,

## THE WISE MEN

and when they arrived at one of the gates, with their servants, their camels, and their gifts, they put the eager question:

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship Him!"

They were so sure of finding this King, that it must have been a shock to them to discover that no one would admit to knowing anything about this new King of the Jews.

Joseph and Mary had kept their secret, as far as they could, but what of the shepherds and those in the Temple who had heard what Simeon and Anna had said?

Perhaps they only half believed what they had heard, or more likely they were terrified as to what Herod might do to them if they mentioned anything about this Bethlehem Baby to these strangers. It was certainly the most dangerous thing for any one to talk of a new king, for Herod lived in dread of some one coming to tear from him, or his remaining family, the throne of Judæa.

But the Wise Men's keen questions set the talk going, and it reached Herod. Certain Wise Men from the east had arrived, inquiring about a new King of the Jews. No wonder Herod was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him! He lost no time, but gathered together the chief priests and scribes, and demanded of them where the Messiah or Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, "In Bethlehem of Judæa; for thus it is written by the prophet: 'And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor, which shall be a Shepherd to My people Israel.'"

This new King was not to be a blood-thirsty tyrant, but a Shepherd to the very weakest of His flock.

Then Herod called the Wise Men, and spoke to them in private, so that he might find out the exact day upon which the wonderful star had appeared. This would help him to guess how old this so-called Royal Babe was likely to be.

The treacherous old king was quite friendly to the Wise Men, and did not give them any hint as to the dreadful thought that was in his mind. In fact, they thought he was as anxious as they were to do the young King honour.

"Go," said Herod, "and search diligently for the young Child,

## THE WISE MEN

and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come to worship Him."

So the Wise Men set out for Bethlehem, full of glad hope, and carrying with them rich gifts for the Royal Child.

It was getting dusk, and as they approached Bethlehem the sky was aflame with the shining star, and, to their great joy, it appeared to shine down upon a certain house.

They knocked, the door was opened, and they were invited to enter.

How anxiously their hearts beat! Had the Star deceived them and brought them on a useless journey?

No, there, under the lamplight, they saw the young mother, with a Baby on her knee, and Joseph standing by.

There was something in the face of the mother, and something in the face of the Baby, which told these Wise Men that they had not taken the long adventurous journey in vain. This Baby was surely "He that is born King of the Jews."

How thankful and glad they were to fall on their knees in worship! Then they brought out their presents of gold and precious spices, such as frankincense, to make a fragrant smell when burned, and myrrh, used to take away pain.

However much Joseph and Mary had wondered about the visit of the shepherds, they must have been more surprised at the arrival of these Wise Men, who were not Jews, but Gentiles from some far Eastern country.

A fear may have overshadowed their joy, when the Wise Men explained how anxious King Herod was to know all about the Holy Child. Could they trust such a king? That night, the Wise Men received a dream-warning. They were on no account to return to Herod to report what they had discovered. They were to set forth instantly for their own country, and be sure to choose a different road from that along which they had come.

Whether the Wise Men told Joseph and Mary of their change of plan we do not know, but if they did, Joseph and Mary must have been very anxious, for they knew only too well about King Herod and his savage ways.

That night, Joseph received a warning by an Angel in a dream: "Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into



## THE WISE MEN

Egypt, and be thou there, until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

Joseph waked with a start, and we can imagine that all was very still, as he stared into the darkness. He may have heard the soft breathing of the sleeping Mary, as she lay with the Child cuddled warmly beside her

Joseph must have lighted a lamp, and moved about quietly. The angel's warning would be obeyed instantly. It could be no pretence, for the terror of Herod was very real. The Wise Men had been warned, and now the warning had come to him.

When Mary waked, Joseph told her the dream, and what the angel had commanded them to do. She moved the sleeping Child gently from her, and rose to help Joseph to get everything ready for that strange flight.

The faithful ass was saddled, and loaded up with what they needed, and we may be sure they took the gifts of the Wise Men, for the gold at least would help them to do all they could for the Child.

We can see them setting forth in the very early morning, upon some road leading south to the unknown country of Egypt. We do not know the track they took, but most likely Joseph avoided the public road as far as he could.

It was indeed an anxious flight; and though both Joseph and Mary trusted that God would protect the Child given into their charge, how glad they must have been when at last they came in sight of the Egyptian boundary!

And as they crossed, and found themselves safe from King Herod's rule, they knelt and thanked God.

## CHAPTER 6

### WHAT KING HEROD DID

KING HEROD, after waiting day after day for news from the Wise Men, discovered that he had been mocked, and that they had given him the slip and gone back to the East. He was very angry, for he guessed that they had found the King they were seeking.





## WHAT KING HEROD DID

In his fury, he gave a terrible order. He commanded that **every** child in Bethlehem and the district, being two years old or under, was to be slaughtered. The dreadful command was obeyed. The soldiers marched into Bethlehem, and killed any innocent little children whom they could find.

Near Bethlehem is the tomb where Jacob buried his beloved wife, Rachel, and the writer of this story reminds us that the prophet Jeremiah once wrote:

"In Rama, was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not "

It is a poetry-picture of Rachel joining her cries with the cries of the poor Bethlehem mothers

These children passed into the Home of the Father in Heaven, and are known as the "Holy Innocents," and there is a charming legend of how the children, turned into happy angels, flew round the Baby Jesus as he was being carried into Egypt, and how the Baby Jesus threw out His arms towards them and smiled at them.

That is only a pretence story; but we may enjoy it, and begin to think of Jesus safe in Egypt, growing bigger and stronger, and learning to walk, to run, to talk, and to take notice of the things he saw around him.

He was happy with his mother, in some Egyptian house, while Joseph worked as a carpenter to earn money, and waited until the sign came to him from God that he was to leave Egypt and return to Nazareth.

## CHAPTER 7

### NAZARETH AND THE GALILÆANS

**NAZARETH** was a busy little town, lying somewhat secluded to the south-west of the Sea of Galilee, and the outlet was by a road which led down into the fertile Plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel.

Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament through which we have travelled, and we must go back to the days of Solomon to understand Galilee.

## NAZARETH AND THE GALILÆANS

When Hiram, King of Tyre, lent Solomon men to cut down the cedar wood which he needed for the Temple and for his own palace, Solomon gave him twelve small towns, which were called Galilee, which merely meant a "circle"; and Galilee of the Gentiles, or foreigners, became a common phrase with the Jews.

But when Jesus was a boy, the whole northern province of Palestine was called Galilee, and we can trace its boundaries on the map. Galilee, at this date, was well populated, and possessed many small towns, especially round the Sea of Galilee. But a large proportion of the inhabitants were not Jews; and even the Jews who did live there were greatly despised by the Jews who lived in Jerusalem and Judæa. The Galilæans were distinguished by their independent and turbulent spirit, and the Romans were constantly finding it necessary to send soldiers, to put down rebellion.

The Roman Governor, or Tetrarch, had his palace at Tiberias, a modern city on the shores of the lake. Indeed, this lake was often called by the new name, the Lake of Tiberias.

Now, it happened one day that people in Nazareth noticed some friends of theirs, whom they had not seen for a long time. They were slowly mounting up the steep road—and surely that man was Joseph, the carpenter, noted for his fine honest work? Yes, and there was Mary, his beautiful young wife.

But who was that small Boy, holding on to the reins of the ass, or skipping along the highroad, or running off to snatch at some flowers?

Many things had happened since the Baby Jesus had been carried down into Egypt. Herod the Great was dead, and one of his sons, Archelaus was ruler in Jerusalem, and another son, Herod Antipas, was Tetrarch of Galilee. Archelaus had already shown himself to be cruel like his father, and an Angel told Joseph in a dream that, though the time had come to leave Egypt, he must not stay in Judæa, but go north to Nazareth.

"Arise," said the Angel, "and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead which sought the young Child's life."

Jesus never ran about on the hills round Bethlehem, as David had done; and we do not hear that He ever went there again, though He may have, for the story of the Life of Jesus

## NAZARETH AND THE GALILÆANS

which we have in the Bible is very short, and a great many things which we would like to know are left out.

We learn almost nothing from the records about the actual childhood of Jesus; but we can guess a good deal from what Jesus said, and the stories He told, when He was grown up.

He was certainly a very noticing boy. He noticed how His mother made bread, and mended His clothes, and ground the corn, and went to the well for water. He knew about the children who played happily with one another, and the children who sulked and refused to play.

He watched the sower at work, and noticed how the seed fell on all kinds of ground, and how the birds swooped down to steal it. Jesus could tell the signs of good weather and bad weather in the sky, and He learnt the ways of foxes, wolves, sparrows, and eagles. We are sure that He must have known shepherds, and He may have followed them and helped them when they went off to find some poor lost sheep.

He was fond of beautiful country life, and, as He roamed the hills, He may have brought home exquisite flowers, which He found nestling in the sheltered parts, and wondered at their delicate beauty.

Jesus was a strong boy, and we never hear of His being ill; and many a time He must have climbed the Tabor Mountain, and looked East to the distant lands, and Westward to the sparkling sea, and noticed the traders as they passed in the distance, and the different kinds of craft on the Great Sea.

Jesus watched wedding processions, and funerals, and He heard how people bargained in the markets. He soon discovered that some men and women, whether Jews, Greeks, or Romans, were very grand and rich, while others were miserably poor.

Jesus had lessons, first from Joseph, and afterwards from the Rabbi, or Master, as He sat on the floor of the Synagogue. The lessons were difficult, mostly in Hebrew, and Jesus had to learn long psalms and chapters of the scriptures off by heart, and it was as hard for Him to learn His lessons patiently as it was for any other boy.

But Jesus learnt of the stories which we have followed, and, as He grew older, He would be able to take long walks and see for

## NAZARETH AND THE GALILÆANS

Himself such places as Mount Carmel, Mount Gilboa, the Valley of Jezreel, and the river Jordan. Brothers and sisters filled the home, and Jesus must often have had to help His mother in her care of them.

We must not forget the sheer delight of the carpenter's shop, where real things were made, and where people of every class and race came to consult Joseph, and give him orders for what they wanted. Joseph would make wooden kneading troughs, tables, stools, bowls, yokes for oxen, handles for the ploughs and spades. He probably did work in the homes of Nazareth, and it may be that he took Jesus with him.

The story tells us that "Jesus gained in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man."

So, by this, we know that Jesus was a favourite, and that the people round about loved Him. For this strong, healthy boy was not thinking of Himself, nor of what He could get from others, but only of how He might give and help.

## CHAPTER 8

### ANOTHER BOY

WE must not forget that other boy, whom we called the Fore-runner, and whose name was John. He was older than Jesus, and his mother, Elizabeth, was Mary's cousin. John was a strange but splendid sort of boy, with dark eyes, and a hard, muscular body. He spent much of his time wandering about the wild "Wilderness of Judah," amongst the rocks and caves, where David had lived in his outcast days. John's playground as a child was not nearly so lovely with flowers as the playground of Jesus. But it does not seem as though John cared for beauty as Jesus did.

We are not told in the Bible that John and Jesus ever met as boys, but it is quite likely that they did so. Many celebrated pictures hang in picture galleries of Jesus and John together, but pictures do not, of course, prove that the boys ever met. They must have been very different, but very much alike in one point:







## ANOTHER BOY

their clear honest eyes saw things that passed about them, as they really were. They could neither of them be deceived.

Jesus saw many sad things in Galilee, and He heard rough, angry, and dangerous talk about rebelling against the Romans. While he was a boy the Romans came more than once to punish the Galilæans who had taken up arms against the Emperor. The captured men were not treated as honourable prisoners of war, and, just as a master in those days could get his disobedient slaves flogged and crucified, so the Romans crucified the poor Galilæans along the high roads, as a warning to others. We must understand that this kind of Roman terror and rebellion was going on, or we shall not understand what follows.

The sight of such pain must have hurt Jesus deeply, and sent Him rushing home to His mother; or perhaps He escaped away amongst the hills, so that He could talk in secret to His Heavenly Father, and ask what such dreadful sights meant.

If Jesus and John did meet, we are sure that they talked of real things, such as boys do talk of when they are alone. John's heart was full of a fierce passion and fury against the wrong-doing he saw, and he was like what we can imagine Elijah must have been as a boy.

The heart of Jesus burned with indignation also. But no evil found a place in His pure heart. He wanted to throw out His arms to the world, and to beg mankind to love, as His Heavenly Father loved.

It was not until Jesus grew to manhood that He was able to show the way to such a love.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE FIRST PASSOVER FEAST

WHEN Jesus was twelve years old, which would be reckoned about sixteen to-day, He was considered almost grown-up, and fit to take his place amongst the crowds who gathered from all parts of the land to celebrate the Feast of the Passover at Jerusalem.

## THE FIRST PASSOVER FEAST

Jesus knew all about the Passover Feast, and He must have been glad indeed when His turn came to join the Galilæan caravan, which travelled east and south, and then west again to the City of David.

Thoroughly educated as He was in His Jewish history, the whole land was like a picture-book to Jesus; but Jerusalem, the City chosen out by His Heavenly Father as the Temple site, was the most inspiring of all, and Jesus must have asked Joseph and Mary endless questions as to what Jerusalem was really like.

We do not know how much Mary had yet told the boy as to His birth in Bethlehem, His presentation in the Temple, His early days in Egypt, nor of the promise that He was, in truth, the Christ of God. Indeed the Bible does not tell us very clearly about this, but it was common knowledge that a King, a Messiah or Christ, was expected, and in the synagogue Jesus sang psalms of the King Who was to come.

We know that Jesus already talked to His Heavenly Father, and listened to His voice; though what that Father told Jesus about Himself and what was to come, we shall never know. But already, at twelve years old, Jesus was far wiser than His mother.

As the travellers toiled up the fifteen miles from Jericho, they enlivened the journey with music. They had drums and cymbals and other instruments, and they sang joyously. Towards the end of their journey the Mount of Olives hid Jerusalem from them, and it was only upon gaining the summit that the City across the valley burst into view, with its white marble buildings, its towers, and its golden-roofed Temple.

Jerusalem! "The City of Gold and Snow," as it has been called.

The boy from Nazareth probably stood very still, His hand on the rein of the ass upon which His mother was seated. Perhaps He turned round and looked into Mary's face and smiled. There lay the City of David; but the throne had passed from David. The government was in the hands of the Romans, who had just deposed Archelaus, the "pitiless monster" as he had been called. The whole city was confused, disordered, and anxious as to the future.

These simple Galilæans, though in fact they were of the Royal House of David, would not be lodging in Jerusalem. Jesus would help Joseph to set up the booth, made of mats, wicker

## THE FIRST PASSOVER FEAST

work, or branches, which was to serve as a shelter for the week. All over the slopes of the Mount of Olives others were making booths, and friends and relatives greeted one another eagerly, and there was happiness and song and laughter, mixed with the anxious talk as to the state of the country.

We should like to think that John was there, but no mention is made of him.

Let us imagine that Jesus remained on the Mount of Olives on that first evening, and saw the setting sun flame over the "gold and snow." Let us see Him lie down in the open, under the night sky, wrapped round in His heavy cloak.

He wakes to the sound of the singing of birds, and suddenly, as He listens, He hears the silver trumpets sounding forth from the Temple. The trumpets proclaimed that the Temple doors were open, and that the morning sacrifices were beginning.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE TEMPLE

THE Temple which Jesus entered was not Solomon's Temple, nor the Temple built by the Jews when they returned from exile, but the magnificent Temple constructed by Herod the Great on the site of the others.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us that at first the plateau on the top of the hill was not large enough for the Temple, the altars and the courts, and they added mounds, and broke down the walls to the north, and filled up great gullies, until at last there was sufficient space.

There were wonderful porticoes supported by pillars, formed of immense white marble blocks, and the roofs were adorned with cedar wood, with fretwork and carving. And in the centre of all was the Temple itself.

Jesus had a beautiful mind, and loved all beautiful things; and on this morning we can imagine Him, climbing the hill and

## THE TEMPLE

slipping off His sandals, and stepping over the coloured pavements, looking at the pillars and the mighty blocks and the carving.

Presently, as He advanced towards the Temple itself, He would come upon a partition of stone, on which there stood pillars at equal distances. On this stone, written in Greek and Roman, was a warning that no foreigner must go beyond this wall, on pain of death.

Jesus would stop and read this inscription, and perhaps He wondered why the Gentiles were not allowed to go into His Father's house. He must often have played with Gentile boys in Nazareth.

As He was now twelve He had the right to pass forward, but even He might not enter the Court of the Priests. But He could now see the great Altar of sacrifice, and, beyond Him, up a flight of steps, there was the Temple itself.

It was a gold and silver gate through which Jesus could see the Temple. And on the walls and gates there hung golden vines from which clusters of grapes hung, as tall as a man.

The actual Temple was in two parts, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, just as the Tabernacle had been divided.

In the outer Holy place there was the altar of incense, the seven golden candlesticks, the table of shewbread. Beyond, there hung a Babylonian veil over golden doors, of blue, silver, scarlet, and purple.

But in the Holy of Holies, Jesus knew, there was nothing, for the Ark had been lost long ago. Yet what did the Ark matter now? For standing there among the crowd was a Boy of twelve, Whom some would call Jesus of Nazareth, but Who, we know, was the Son of God.

Amidst all this beauty Jesus must have noticed the crowding people, and the traders pouring in from Jerusalem, the noise and confusion of the animals who were driven into the Court of the Gentiles, the bargaining shouts, and the clinking of money.

Jews could only pay their dues to the Priests with the Temple Shekel; so they were compelled to bring their ordinary Roman coins to the tables of the money-changers, who made an easy profit for themselves.

The beautiful pavement was filthy with the pollution of the

## THE TEMPLE

animals, and the general hubbub spoiled the sweet singing of the Temple choir. Again we can imagine Jesus frowning, and His able and sensitive mind must have been astonished at the laxness of the Temple authorities. Why did they allow all this confusion?

But under the Cloisters, seated by the pillars, learned Rabbis sat, teaching those who assembled to listen. Jesus would draw closer, so that He also might hear and learn.

## CHAPTER II

### THE END OF THE FEAST

THE Passover Feast was over, and the time had come for the visiting Jews to break up their booths, load up their camels and asses, and return to their homes.

Joseph and Mary set forth with the Galilæan caravan, and took the steep mountain road down to Jericho. Jesus was not beside them, but they did not trouble about that. The Boy was such a general favourite that He would be sure to be happy with some relatives or acquaintances. They were so certain of this, they never even inquired about Him until the end of the first day. Then, to their consternation, they discovered that no one knew anything about Him.

There was but one thing to do. They faced about, and returned to Jerusalem. They were indeed filled with dread, and it was not until the third day that it struck them to look for Jesus in the Temple.

And there they found Him, amongst the Rabbis, both hearing them and asking them questions. People gathered nearer to listen, and all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and His answers.

And when the parents saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said unto Him, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing."

Jesus answered his mother gently, as though to remind her of something she had forgotten:

## THE END OF THE FEAST

"How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

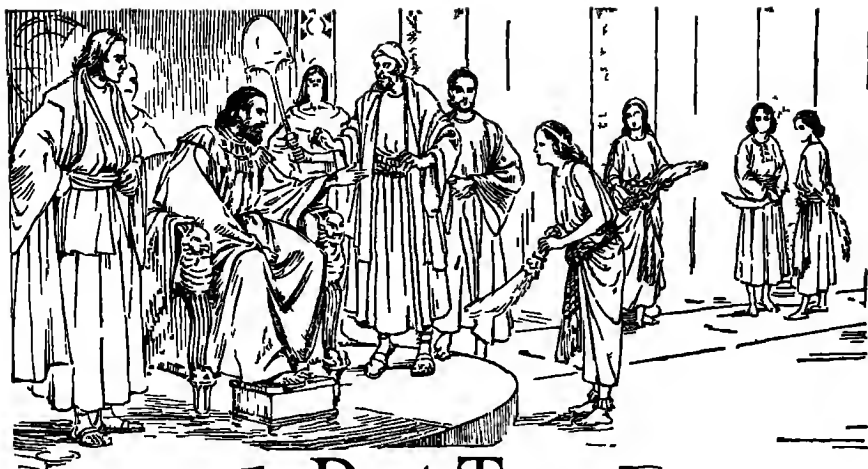
Neither His father nor His mother understood what Jesus meant; and He rose immediately, and passed out of the Temple with them.

They returned to Nazareth, and there Jesus lived on, in obedience to His parents. But Mary thought a great deal about her Son, and kept His sayings in her heart, even though again and again she would not be able to understand them. Jesus continued His studies, and became a skilled carpenter, and learnt many deep truths from His Father in Heaven.

We hear no more of Joseph, and it is thought that he died, and that Jesus had to act as an elder brother to the younger ones. But though it might seem that He lived an ordinary carpenter's life, we know that it was not ordinary, for He also lived a mysterious and secret life of prayer, and continually came to His Father in Heaven, that He might gain wisdom and strength and power.

From now onwards, for about eighteen years, the Bible tells us nothing more about Him.





## Part Two

### CHAPTER I

#### BY THE JORDAN

**W**HEN Jesus was about thirty years old, the whole country was greatly disturbed by the news that a strange prophet had appeared from the Wilderness of Judah. He was preaching every day on the banks of the river Jordan, and people were coming in crowds to hear him. This prophet spoke out sternly enough, and urged his hearers to repent of the wrong things they had done, and to be baptized in the river, as a sign of repentance.

Who was this prophet?

Some said that he must be Elijah, come down from heaven, and others that he was the long-promised King of the Jews. But, actually, his name was John, and we can easily guess that he was the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the Forerunner, who had grown up to be this stern, grave, and wild-looking prophet.

John's hair had never been cut; his body was strong and muscular; he never touched dainties and never drank wine. His food was the food of the very poor, such as locusts, boiled in salt water and dried, and wild honey which he found. His only drink was pure water.



## BY THE JORDAN

As for his dress, he wore a rough garment of camel's hair, gathered in by a leather belt.

John was a messenger, as a prophet had written: "Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight.'"

The people would know what "making straight" meant, for in those days, when a king was to travel in state, the rough roads were mended, holes were filled, and stones removed.

John saw much wrong-doing all around him, and, when the multitudes thronged, he did not fear to speak out.

"O generation of vipers! Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

John may remember having seen the crowds of maddened vipers as they fled in front of some wilderness fire.

"Bring forth fruits," he cried, "to show that you repent, and begin not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father!'"

By this he meant that the fact of being Jews did not excuse their sins.

"Why," argued John, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham! Every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire."

Now, Jesus had heard that John was baptizing and preaching, and He took this as a sign from God that He must leave His retired life in Nazareth, and take up the work His Father had sent Him into the world to do.

What did Mary say to Jesus, when He told her of His decision? Perhaps she remembered what the old Priest Simeon had said to her:

"Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul."

So Jesus walked to Bethabara, which was on the eastern side of the Jordan, a few miles south of the Lake of Galilee, and not more than thirty miles from Nazareth. He stood amongst the people, and listened to John's inspiring and commanding voice, and, by and by, He took his place amongst those who were waiting to be baptized.

"There cometh One mightier than I," cried John, "the latchet



HERNANDEZ



## BY THE JORDAN

of Whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

We can imagine that as John caught sight of Jesus his keen flashing eyes took on a wondering look, and his voice changed to an awed gentleness.

"I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?"

But Jesus spoke to John confidentially, and said: "Suffer" (or allow) "it to be so now."

For Jesus wished to fulfil a religious duty with the rest of the people.

So John baptized Jesus, and as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him.

"And lo, a voice from heaven came, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.' "

## CHAPTER 2

### IN THE WILDERNESS

"AND immediately the Spirit driveth Jesus into the Wilderness. And He was there in the Wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him."

It is impossible for us to understand all that this meant; but we know that Jesus had just been baptised, and was starting out on a great work for His Father, and, just as Moses and Elijah were driven away alone, so Jesus spent these lonely days and nights, being trained and tested for all that was to come.

Jesus came to "destroy the works of the Devil," so no wonder that when He was worn out and weary, at the end of the forty days, Satan came to persuade Him to give up His task.

"If Thou be the Son of God," said the Tempter, "command these stones to be made bread."

Jesus was very hungry, and He had the power to turn the stones into bread. But He never worked a miracle just for Himself,

## IN THE WILDERNESS

and later on it was said of Him: "He saved others, Himself He could not save."

He did not live by bread, but by obeying His Father.

Then the Tempter took Him in a vision to Jerusalem, and set Him on a high pinnacle of the Temple, from which He could look deep down into the stony valley below.

"If Thou be the Son of God," came the tempting whisper, "cast Thyself down, for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.'"

But again Jesus refused, for how could He challenge His Father to protect Him from the consequences of a rash and fool-hardy act?

Then Satan offered Jesus the most wily temptation of all.

He took Jesus in a vision to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.

Jesus could see Rome and Athens, Egypt, towns, country and sea. There were the markets, the trading ships, the war galleys, the temples, the palaces, the hovels where the poor groaned, the dungeons where the prisoners languished, the sad slave markets, the riches, the splendour and the glory.

"All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me!" said Satan.

What could Satan mean?

We cannot see right through this mysterious temptation; but it is clear that Jesus had come into the world to win the hearts of men, women, and children to love and obey His Father, and bring in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Satan was now offering to help Jesus, if Jesus would but bow down to him. But Jesus could not bow to Satan, even to save Himself or others from toil and suffering. He saw a more glorious vision.

One day, "Every knee would bow, and every tongue would confess that Jesus Himself, one with the Father, was Lord and Christ."

Jesus could not wish people to be loyal to Him at Satan's command! They must all come to Him of their own free will, drawn by the Father's love.

## IN THE WILDERNESS

And He answered sternly, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve!"

When Satan heard these words, he fled away for that time, and Jesus, faint and exhausted, kneeled in prayer, the victor in that mysterious battle.

Angels now brought Him food and drink, and we like to think that they watched over Him, as He fell into a long refreshing sleep.

## CHAPTER 3

### BACK TO BETHABARA

WE must return to John, who was preaching and baptizing day after day, and drawing the crowds to him. Now, the Priests and the Levites were growing anxious about this new prophet, and they decided to send a deputation to John to find out the truth.

"Who art thou?" they asked.

And John confessed and denied not, and said, "I am not the Christ."

"What then? Art thou Elijah?"

"I am not," said John.

The Jews were expecting that one day a great prophet would arrive, so they said, "Art thou that prophet?"

"No!" said John.

"Who art thou?" they urged, "that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself?"

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"

"But why baptizest thou?" they asked, "if thou be not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that prophet?"

Now John saw that Jesus had returned, and that He was standing amongst the people, so he said:

"I baptize with water; but there standeth One among you whom ye know not. He it is who, coming after me, is preferred before me, Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

John always proclaimed that Jesus was altogether higher than

## BACK TO BETHABARA

he, and on the following day, as John saw Jesus coming towards him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth away the sin of the world."

Again, as he was walking with two of his disciples, he saw Jesus, and exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard and followed Jesus, and Jesus turned and spoke.

"What seek ye?"

"Rabbi," (or Master or Teacher) "where dwellest Thou?"

"Come and see," said Jesus simply.

Within a few days, several whom we shall meet later began to know Jesus and to follow Him.

Andrew and his brother Simon Peter, Philip of Bethsaida, and Nathanael called Bartholomew, all made friends with Jesus at this time, and became His disciples. Later, they were amongst the Twelve whom Jesus chose out specially to be with Him during His ministry.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE FIRST MIRACLE IN CANA OF GALILFE

THE sun is setting, and in the small town of Cana, a few miles north of Nazareth, people are standing about, watching for a wedding procession. It is coming! There are torches and lamps, and all can hear the music and the singing.

The bride is there, veiled and wreathed with flowers, for she is being escorted to the bridegroom's home. Her maidens are behind her, and at last, to her joy, the bridegroom meets her. The guests crowd into the bridegroom's house, and one of them is chosen to be the Master of the Feast.

And amongst the guests we find Jesus, joyous and friendly, making all around Him feel happy. He has with Him several young Galilæans, who have been visiting John the Baptist. We already know some of their names—Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael or Bartholomew.

## THE FIRST MIRACLE IN CANA OF GALILEE

It was apparently a family wedding, for the bride and bridegroom were probably relatives of Mary, and she was present, attending to the wants of the guests. After the Feast had been going on for some time, there was trouble on the faces of the servants. Something had gone wrong, something which would bring down disgrace upon the bridegroom and his family.

The servants whispered to Mary, and she took it upon herself to hint to Jesus that He might help them.

"They have no wine!" she said anxiously.

But Jesus smiled into her eyes, and said softly: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."

Jesus meant that he was not ready to act, and to call his mother "Woman" was not rude, but was a term of respect. Mary was quite satisfied, for she said to the worried servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

There were set there six waterpots, which had been emptied of the water which had washed the guests' hands and feet, and Jesus ordered the servants to fill them with water.

So they filled them up to the brim.

"Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the Feast," he ordered.

And they bare it.

When the ruler of the Feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants who drew the water knew), the governor called the bridegroom, and said to him, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have drunk well, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

This is all we know of the story, and we must imagine what the guests said when they tasted this strange wine.

This miracle of turning the water into wine made Jesus's new disciples believe in Him all the more.

After this Jesus did many more miracles, but none of them need surprise us. He was filled with the power of God, the same power which created a universe of stars, and the electrical forces; which makes the butterfly's wing, and the bird's song; which causes each one of us to grow, and stop growing; and which controls the very shape of trees and the colour of flowers.



## THE FIRST MIRACLE IN CANA OF GALILEE

Jesus, who had refused to turn stones into bread for Himself, gladly turned the water into wine for the happiness of the guests at this wedding Feast.

After the wedding Jesus went with His mother, His brothers, and His disciples to Capernaum, a small town on the west of the lake.

Jesus did not, however, stay there long, for the Feast of the Passover was coming on, and so He went up to Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER 5

### HIS FATHER'S HOUSE

JESUS had probably attended the Passover Feast every year since he was twelve years old. He had often noticed something which went on at the Temple, and every time it was a grief to Him.

We must now think of Jesus as a strong young man of thirty. Each of us must make a picture of Jesus for ourselves.

An old Scottish miner once told a friend that he had seen his Lord, Who had come to him when he was in trouble; and when the friend asked what his Lord was like, he answered, "My Lord had a strong man's face, but his eyes—they were the eyes of a woman."

So we shall discover that Jesus was as strong as any man in the fullness of his strength, yet as tender as any woman.

And so it was, that when Jesus went to the Passover Feast at the beginning of His "Ministry," as His life's work has been called, He knew that His first duty was to teach the people to respect His Father's House.

How could He make them understand?

As usual there were the crowds of traders, selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers, just as He had seen them when He was a boy.

So Jesus entered the Temple during the busiest time of the day, and took with Him a whip of small cords, or reeds, as a sign of His authority.

## HIS FATHER'S HOUSE

There he stood, fearless and quite determined, and He cried out to the merchants, "Take these things hence! Make not My Father's house an house of merchandise!"

He drove away the sheep, the oxen, and the traders from the Court of the Gentiles, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables.

Why did this crowd submit to the strange young Galilæan? Not because of the whip of cords; but because there was a power about Him, which they could not understand. They were compelled to acknowledge that they were doing wrong.

Yet the Jews protested, for they were completely bewildered, and they asked Jesus for His authority.

"What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?" they asked.

"Destroy this Temple, and in three days, I will raise it up!"

But the Jews answered, "Forty and six years was this Temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days?"

Jesus did not explain what He meant at the time; but we must remember what Jesus did say, for this was a saying which the Jews could not forget and we shall hear of it again.

Four hundred years before, the Prophet Malachi had said:

"The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple."  
And so it happened.

Many of the religious Jews, however, must have been pleased to see what Jesus did, for the condition of this Gentile Court was intolerable, and a disgrace to all the nation.

So opinions were divided, and Jesus continued working His miracles, and many believed upon Him.

Could it be true that John the Baptist was right?

Had the Christ come? Was He here, in their midst?

## CHAPTER 6

### JESUS PASSES THROUGH SAMARIA

IN the map we see how Samaria divides Judæa from Galilee; and, as many Jews hated to pass through Samaria, they chose to travel

## JESUS PASSES THROUGH SAMARIA

from north to south, by the route which led east of the Jordan.

We shall remember how, when the Jews returned from Babylon, they and the Samaritans quarrelled bitterly. There was some fault on each side, but the unhappy feeling had not died down.

Each party tried to spite the other, and the Jews so hated and despised the Samaritans, that they declared that to eat their bread was worse than eating swine's flesh, which Moses had forbidden.

The Jews had refused to allow the Samaritans to help them in rebuilding the Temple, and the Samaritans had built a temple of their own on Mount Gerizim, but this had been destroyed. Samaria itself, once the capital of the Northern Israelites, had been turned into a Greek city, and the genuine Samaritans were now chiefly the villagers and country people.

But when Jesus decided to return to Galilee from Jerusalem, He chose to travel through Samaria, for He could not think of the Samaritans as enemies.

After a tiring journey over the hills, Jesus and His disciples arrived at the small town of Sychar. The disciples went off to buy food, and Jesus sat down by the very well which Jacob had sunk, more than seventeen hundred years before.

There it was, a hundred feet deep, with an alcove built round it, in which there were stone seats.

Jesus was weary, and the noonday sun was hot, and as He rested He longed for a drink from the cool water. But He had neither a rope nor a water-pot with Him.

But presently a woman came walking along to the well, with her water-pot on her head, and her rope dangling from her arm.

Jesus watched as she let down the pot, and brought it up brimming, but the woman was careful not to notice a Jew.

She was startled indeed, when she heard Him say quietly, "Give me to drink."

"How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" she exclaimed.

And Jesus answered, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee 'Give Me to drink,' thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water!"

"Sir," she said, "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From whence then hast Thou that living water? Art



“And there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping  
watch over their flocks by night.”



"His food was the food of the very poor, such as locusts"—above, a plague of locusts in flight, on the right, *not* leaf-covered branches, but locusts at rest upon a tree they have stripped bare.



"The Mount of Temptation"  
—believed to be the high  
mountain up which Satan  
took Jesus in the vision

## JESUS PASSES THROUGH SAMARIA

Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us this well, and drank thereof himself, and his children and his cattle?"

Then Jesus tried to explain, and he talked to the woman of deep, serious things, which made her ashamed of the wrong deeds she had done in her life, and at last she exclaimed, "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet!"

Mount Gerizim was very near to Sychar, and the woman said earnestly, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and Ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

This was one of the questions about which the Jews and the Samaritans disputed, and Jesus was ready with an answer which has become very important to us all.

There loomed the great mountain, beginning to rise within a few hundred yards of where they were.

"Believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither at this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father . . . the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

We see why these words matter to us. If God was only to be worshipped at Jerusalem, none of us who live in Europe, America, Africa, Asia, Australia, from the North to the South, would have the right to worship. But Jesus has opened the Father's House to the wide world

The woman could not of course understand all this, and she said doubtfully, "I know that when the Messiah, which is called Christ, comes, He will tell us all things"

"I that speak unto thee am He!" said Jesus gently.

Then the disciples came hurrying from the town with the food, and they were greatly puzzled that Jesus should be talking to this woman

But the woman, in her excitement, left her water-pot and hurried off into the town, and said to the neighbours, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?"

She was certainly one of the first missionaries for Jesus.

But Jesus was looking so refreshed that His disciples said to one another, "Hath any man brought Him aught to eat?"

## JESUS PASSES THROUGH SAMARIA

"My meat," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work!"

And as He pointed to the shoots of corn in the fields, He added, "Do not ye say that there will yet be four months before the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, 'Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are ripe already to harvest!'"

The disciples must have given their Master food, and they had the water which the woman had left. Soon afterwards the Samaritans came flocking out of the town to find out for themselves what this new prophet had to say.

They were so hospitable that they urged Jesus to remain amongst them; so He stayed there two days, and taught them, and many believed upon Him, and they said to the woman:

"Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

## CHAPTER 7

### JOHN IS THROWN INTO PRISON

Now, John had moved into Samaria, and was baptizing in Ænon, near Salim, in the country in which Saul wandered looking for his father's asses.

John had heard that Jesus was already preaching, and that His disciples were baptizing; and some of John's disciples were anxious, for they feared that Jesus was becoming more important than their own master.

But John was not jealous of Jesus and he answered them, "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him!' He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all."

John had been telling the rich and the poor to repent and to forsake their sins, and the day came when he went fearlessly to the court of Herod.

Herod Antipas was the Tetrarch of Galilee, and was sometimes



## JOHN IS THROWN INTO PRISON

called king, but that was not his proper title. He was Herod the Great's son, and when he went to Rome he tried to get leave to call himself "king;" the emperor became angry, and banished him.

Herod had done many wrong things, and amongst them he had married his brother's wife, Herodias. John boldly told Herod that this was a sin and against the law; so Herod, afraid of John, and stirred up by Herodias, had him arrested and shut up in a prison named Machærus, which was a dreary fortress overlooking the Dead Sea.

His task as a Forerunner was nearly ended, for the King he had proclaimed was already on the highway. But we can guess what prison meant to him. He had lived out of doors all his life. He was at home in the wind, the storm and the burning heat. His eyes had looked into great distances, and as he lay on the ground to rest he had smelled the fragrance of the earth and the flowers.

Did John ever wonder why Jesus did not rouse a Galilæan band of eager young zealots to rescue him? We cannot tell. But Jesus was Himself hurt by John's sufferings, even though He knew that the Kingdom of God, His Father had sent Him to proclaim, could never be won by the sword.

Curiously, Herod allowed John's disciples to pass backwards and forwards to him in prison, which must have been a great comfort to John.

Jesus knew that, now that John was shut away, He must devote Himself ever more and more to His task of healing and teaching.

## CHAPTER 8

### JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH

THE fame of Jesus, and of what He had done already in Jerusalem and Galilee, had spread far and wide. He had worked many miracles, He had cast out devils and He had preached with an authority which astonished the people. He had even healed the terrible disease of leprosy.

We are told that in Capernaum, as the sun was setting, the

## JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH

people brought to Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at his door. And He healed them, and cast out the devils.

In the morning, Jesus went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. Over and over again, Jesus went away alone to pray to His Father in Heaven, that He might know His will, and be given the power to do it.

On this occasion, His disciples, with Simon Peter leading them, followed and interrupted Him, and said, "All men seek Thee!"

But Jesus answered them patiently, "Let us go into the other towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth."

Now, on a certain Sabbath, the news rushed round Nazareth that the prophet Jesus would be at the synagogue, and there was great expectation amongst those who thronged the place.

When Jesus entered, He knew that this was where He had once sat on the floor, learning His lessons as given him by the Rabbi, and where He had come Sabbath after Sabbath for so many years. And the other worshippers only saw Jesus, the young carpenter, to whom they may have given work, and it seemed impossible that He should be really a prophet.

Yet when the moment came, Jesus stood up to read, as He had a right to do, and the synagogue servant gave him the roll of the prophet Isaiah.

Jesus unwound the roll, and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Jesus rolled up the book, and gave it back to the servant and then He sat down.

And the eyes of all of them that were in the synagogue were fastened upon Him. And He began to say unto them, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Jesus explained what He had read; and, as He did so, they all wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth and they said to one another:

## JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH

"Is not this Joseph's son "

It was particularly hard for them to believe that somebody whom they looked upon as one of themselves, of low rank in the town, could possibly be a prophet, and have the right to preach to them as though He were a Rabbi.

Jesus understood, as He always understood, and answered them reasonably enough:

"Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, 'Physician, heal thyself.' As you have done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country." And as they waited for more, He added, "Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in His own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Serepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow."

As Jesus was speaking, faces began to cloud with anger. Why was Jesus placing a foreigner on high.

But Jesus added, "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."

This was too much for these patriotic listeners. This was no prophet: He was a traitor to His country, just at the very time when many of the Galilæans were straining every nerve to rescue themselves and the Jews generally from the power of the hated Romans.

They had but to look at one another, and the storm of wrath broke out. They rose from their places, and seized Jesus, and dragged Him through the streets, and brought Him to the brow of the hill upon which the city was built. Here they intended to fling Him down, to be broken to death amongst the rocks below.

How often Jesus must have stood on that very spot as a boy and a young man! But now something strange happened. The power of the mob to act was suddenly at an end. Jesus did not struggle with them, nor fight with them; but, looking round upon those familiar faces, He quietly walked away. Not one of them dared to spring forward to lay a finger upon Him.

## JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH

We never read that Jesus went to Nazareth again, but He may have done so. He returned to Capernaum, and continued to preach and to heal, and the fame of Him went into every place of the country round about. He visited the synagogues of Galilee, but it was only at Nazareth that the people refused to hear Him and threw Him out.

As we travel on with Jesus through His marvellous life, we shall notice sad things, such as disappointments and opposition; but we must keep remembering that all the time He carried a deep joy in His heart. It was joy to Him to know that He was doing His Father's will, and bringing new life and new thoughts to men and women, and sowing seeds which were to grow, and in their turn cast their seeds, so that the world might be saved.

## CHAPTER 9

### DISCIPLES FOR JESUS

JESUS chose Capernaum as His home, and He lived there from time to time with Peter and his family.

The Sea of Galilee is now bare and comparatively deserted, but in those days, the lake, only fourteen miles long, was a centre for Romans, Greeks, Jews, and many other races. There were ten towns on its borders, and Herod the Great had built a marvellous Palace in Tiberias, which was a centre of trade and luxury.

Four main roads met the shores of the lake. One passed along the Jordan valley to the west of the river. Another crossed the Jordan and led southwards. One led through Sepphoris, the capital of Galilee, winding westward to the Great Sea, and the fourth went across the Jezreel valley, or Plain of Esdraelon, through Samaria to Jerusalem.

It is said that there were four thousand vessels on the tiny lake; for there were not only the fishing boats, but Roman galleys, and the gilded pleasure boats of the Court and the aristocracy. People of many nationalities thronged this beautiful spot, and many languages could be heard.

## DISCIPLES FOR JESUS

We can see what a centre Capernaum was for the message of Jesus, for not only Jews, but Gentiles, too, could take notice of this young prophet.

Now, though the young men who had joined Jesus at the Jordan had been with Him a great deal, they had not actually given up their work to join Him in His ministry.

It came about one day that the people were pressing upon Jesus so closely on the edge of the lake that He, seeing two fishermen washing their nets, asked that He might enter into one of the empty ships.

The ship he chose belonged to Simon Peter, and He asked Peter to thrust the ship out a little from the shore. This was a strange pulpit, but Jesus found that He could sit down in the ship, and teach the people, and they could hear Him well.

And when He had left off speaking, He said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught of fishes."

"Master, we have toiled all night," answered Peter, "and have taken nothing. Nevertheless, at Thy word, I will let down the net."

And when they had done it, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, who were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships with fish, so that they began to sink.

And when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of fishes which they had taken.

And so were also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon Peter, "Fear not; for henceforth thou shalt catch men."

Then, when Simon Peter and James and John had brought the ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Jesus.

This meant that they gave up their trade, which was an important one, for vast quantities of fish were supplied from the lake, not only to the towns round about but as far as Jerusalem.

But they had something greater to do for mankind than to supply fish. They had now become servants of the Christ.

## SOME EARLY MIRACLES

### CHAPTER 10

#### SOME EARLY MIRACLES

WE cannot follow every wonderful miracle which Jesus did, but we will now chose out a few which happened in the early days of His ministry.

When Jesus returned to Cana, from His visit to Jerusalem, a certain nobleman was very anxious about the illness of his son. He went, therefore, to Jesus, and besought Him that He would come down to Capernaum and heal the boy.

Then Jesus answered, to test him, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

But the nobleman implored Him saying, "Sir, come down, ere my child die!"

"Go thy way!" said Jesus. "Thy son liveth!"

This meant that it was not necessary for Jesus to see the son. A word from Him, even though spoken at a distance, was enough. And the nobleman believed this, and did not press Jesus any more, but went off to his home. On his way, the servants met him, and told him saying, "Thy son liveth!"

Then he inquired of them the hour when he began to amend, and they said, "Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him."

And the father knew that it was at that same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, "Thy son liveth!" And the nobleman and his household believed upon Jesus.

This miracle happened in Jerusalem:

There was a celebrated pool of water in Jerusalem, known as the Pool of Bethesda.

Round this pool many helpless people, lame, blind, withered, and diseased in all kind of ways were wont to gather. It was said that at a certain season an angel touched the water, and made it tremble, and after this "troubling" of the water the first person







## SOME EARLY MIRACLES

who stepped down into the pool was healed from whatever disease he had.

Now, a certain man was lying there, who had had a disease for thirty-eight years; and when Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been a long time just like that, He said to him, "Wilt thou be made well."

The helpless man answered, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

And Jesus said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked; and on the same day was the Sabbath.

Now, the Jews were very strict in keeping the Sabbath day, and it is important that we should notice that there was always trouble when Jesus did good on the Sabbath, and in this case those who were against Him took their chance to find fault.

Seeing the man who had been cured carrying his mat, they instantly challenged him.

"It is the Sabbath day It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed!"

"He that made me whole," said the man, "told me to take up my bed and walk." For the man did not know that it was Jesus, about whom people were talking so much, Who had healed him. Indeed, Jesus had slipped away out of the crowd and disappeared.

But later, when Jesus found the man in the Temple, He said to him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee"

Then the man knew, and told the Jews that the man who had healed him was Jesus.

So the Jews persecuted Jesus, and tried to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day.

But Jesus answered them firmly, "My father is still working, and so am I."

This answer infuriated the Jews still more; for, added to breaking the Sabbath, as they reckoned it, Jesus was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

But Jesus was never afraid of the Jews, and He told them clearly

## SOME EARLY MIRACLES

that He had been sent by His Father, and said, "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of My Father which hath sent Me."

Here is a miracle which caused very great excitement in Galilee. A leper came to Jesus, and, kneeling down, besought Him saying, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

Now, this showed tremendous faith on the leper's part, for in those days no one thought a leper could be cleansed. He was indeed an outcast, and had to cry a warning whenever he passed anybody: "Unclean! Unclean!" in case any should touch him and be infected.

Yet here he was, kneeling before Jesus.

And Jesus did not shrink back from the poor tortured man, but put out His hand and touched him, and said, "I will! Be thou clean!"

And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from the man, and he was cleansed, as, we shall remember, Naaman the Syrian was cleansed, when he dipped in the Jordan, in obedience to Elisha.

Then Jesus warned him, and said, "See thou say nothing to any man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded as evidence for them."

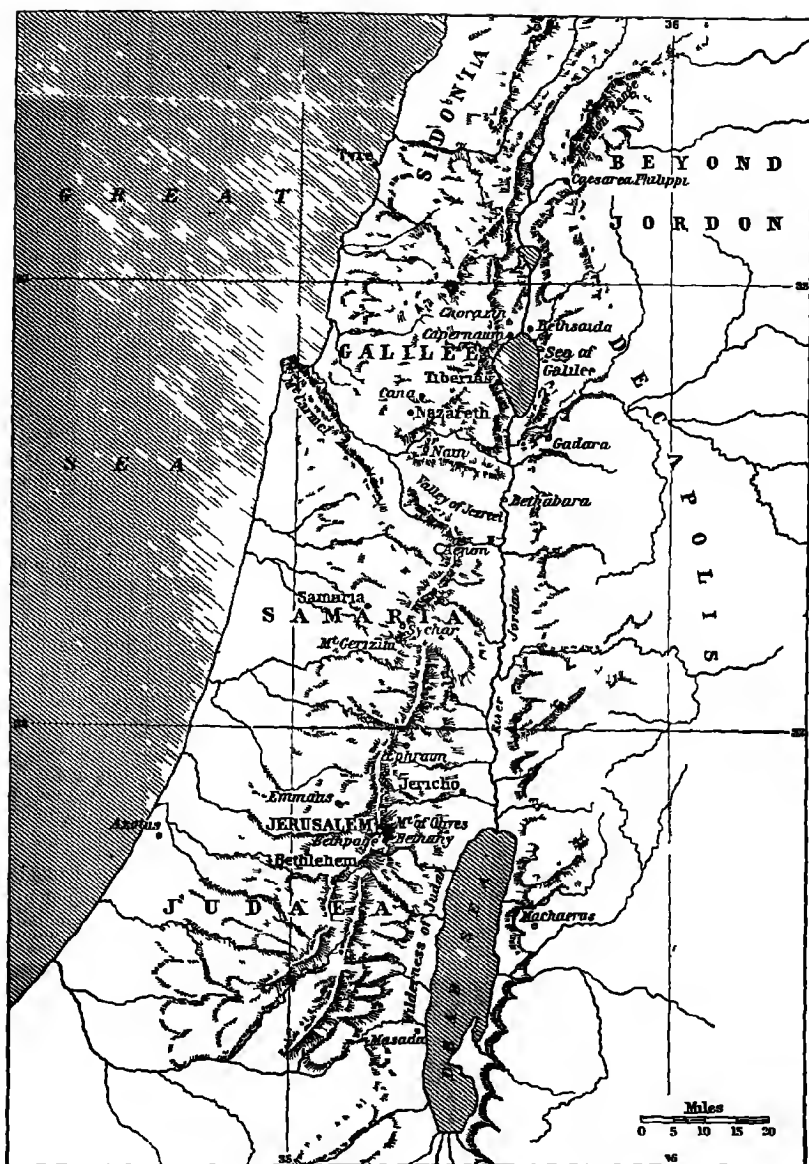
It was the law that, should a leper think he had recovered, he had to prove it before the priest, before he could mix with his fellows again.

But this leper was so excited at what had happened that he forgot all about the warning, and blazed abroad the story; so the people came in such crowds to Jesus, that He had to go away into some desert place.

Yet even here the people found Him out, and they came to Him from every quarter.

This leads us straight to another miracle.

As soon as the people knew that Jesus had returned to Capernaum, the report spread that He was at home. So many gathered



## SOME EARLY MIRACLES

round the house that there was no room to receive them. Amongst the crowd there were Pharisees and doctors of the law, who were come from as far away as Jerusalem, to judge for themselves about this Galilæan prophet. For, as yet, many of them were uncertain and puzzled about Jesus. A young carpenter, from such a place as Nazareth, could not surely be the Messiah for whom the Jewish nation was waiting?

And yet, John the Baptist had announced Him, and He was doing marvellous healing amongst the people, and His teaching was so wonderful that men, women, and even the children listened, as they had never listened to the scribes and Pharisees and doctors of the law.

As Jesus was in the courtyard of the house, it was so crowded about the door that the friends of a poor man, suffering from a trembling palsy, could not force their way through to Him.

No one would give way. But they were so certain that Jesus could heal, that they carried the sick man up the outside stairs on his mat, and, having tied cords to the corners of the mat, they removed some of the tiling which overhung the courtyard, and let down the man, in front of Jesus

Jesus looked up, and knew that there must be great faith in these men's hearts, and, speaking to the palsied sufferer, He said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee "

The scribes and Pharisees were instantly startled. The young Galilæan was being irreverent, and speaking blasphemy against God.

"Who can forgive sins but God only?" they thought.

They did not say the words out loud, but Jesus knew their thoughts, and said quietly, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' or to say, 'Arise and take up thy bed and walk?' " The scribes and Pharisees made no answer, and Jesus added, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," He turned to the sick man and said kindly, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."

The man sprang up. He was now straight and strong, and all his weak trembling had left him. He rolled up his mat, and,

## SOME EARLY MIRACLES

as the astounded people made way for him, flung it on his shoulder and walked sturdily away to meet his friends, who, we may be sure, came rushing to greet him.

All the people glorified God and said to one another:

"We have seen strange things to-day. We never saw it in this fashion."

. . . . .

Before hearing of another miracle, we must notice that Jesus had found a new disciple.

His name was Levi or Matthew, and he was the last man whom we should have thought that Jesus would choose. He was a publican, or tax-collector, and these Jewish tax-collectors for the Romans were despised and hated, and many of them were men who could find no other occupation.

This tax-collector was actually sitting, collecting the money, when Jesus passed and, stopping, said, "Follow me!"

And Matthew left his post and followed Jesus.

A little later, Jesus sat at meat in the house. It is not quite clear whether it was the house in which He was staying, or whether it was Matthew's house, but the Pharisees were astonished that Jesus allowed other collectors and evil-living people to eat at the same table with Him.

They did not quite like to complain openly to Jesus, but they said to His disciples, "Why eateth your Master with tax-collectors and sinners?"

But Jesus heard what they said, and Himself answered:

"It is not the healthy who require a doctor, but the sick. I am not come to call the righteous (or self-righteous), but sinners to repentance."

In the following miracle, we see again how anxious the leaders of the Jews were to find some fault with Jesus. But Jesus took no notice of any danger to Himself, and was always bent on thinking of what was for the good of others.

## SOME EARLY MIRACLES

He was in the synagogue one Sabbath day, and a man was there who had a withered hand. Jesus knew that the Jews were watching to see whether He would heal this man, and we might think that it would have been just as well to wait one more day before doing the good deed.

Not so with Jesus! He noticed the man with the withered hand, and said, "Stand forth!"

The Jews were instantly on the alert. Here might be their chance to put in an accusation against Jesus.

But Jesus asked them calmly, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil, to save life, or to kill?"

They held their peace. They did not dare, as yet, to defy Jesus openly. And when Jesus had looked upon them with anger, being grieved with the hardening of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch forth thine hand!"

And the man stretched out his withered arm, and his hand was restored, whole as the other.

Jesus had in this simple act passed further along a very dangerous path.

These Pharisees went forth from the Synagogue, and began to consult together as to how they might destroy Jesus. It did not appear to them to be wrong to do this, even on the Sabbath day. They decided that their best plan was to take counsel with that party of Jews who called themselves "Herodians." These Herodians claimed to support Herod Antipas, and it was easy for them, and natural, to agree that this Jesus of Nazareth, who was coming before the people as a new king or Messiah, must be destroyed. There must be no rival king to Herod their master.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TWELVE APOSTLES

THERE was a difference between being a disciple and an Apostle. Jesus had very many disciples, but from them He chose out twelve special men who were to be with Him, and share in His ministry,

## THE TWELVE APOSTLES

and go about with Him from place to place. This was a very serious choice to make, and Jesus stayed out all one night, alone with His Father, so that He might know whom to choose.

These Apostles, or "The Twelve" as they were called, were not at all the kind of men we should have expected to be the best for helping to set up the Kingdom of God on earth. They were not learned nor rich nor powerful. None, except perhaps Matthew, had much money, and most of them were Galilæans, who earned their living by hard labour. They were very different in character, and, as we travel along our journey, we shall get to know them better.

Their names were Peter, (or Simon Peter), James, John, Andrew, Bartholomew (or Nathanael), Philip, James (called the Less, to distinguish him from James), Matthew (or Levi), Simon Zelotes, who was of the party of Jewish "Zealots," who wished to rescue the Jews from the Romans by armed rebellion; and Judas Iscariot.

Judas Iscariot may have been also a Zealot, and it seems to us that he was the strangest choice of all, for in the end he betrayed Jesus to His enemies.

From now onwards we shall hear of these disciples, whom Jesus taught and trained so that when He was gone they would be able to carry on His work, and teach the wide world the message of the Kingdom of God.

Different disciples wrote down reports of what Jesus said and did, and stories and sayings were remembered, and were afterwards collected into the form we now call the Gospels. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would co-operate with the disciples in this work, and we are thankful that this was so, or we should now know nothing about Him at all.

It is in St. Matthew's Gospel that we find the famous "Sermon on the Mount," and some of you may like to read the three long chapters for yourselves; but just now we will imagine ourselves amongst the crowd, listening with great surprise to what this young prophet is saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.

## THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Such words make us remember Isaiah, and those who were slaughtered by King Manasseh, when Jerusalem ran with innocent blood.

"Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." Strange that Jesus should call His disciples, or any one of us, the "Light of the World!"

And here is a lesson which the world has not yet learnt:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' but I say unto you: 'That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also.'

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.' But I say unto you. 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you,' That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the tax-collectors the same?"

Jesus also taught His disciples how to pray, in the "Lord's Prayer," as it is called.

"Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever—Amen."

Jesus never gave any commands which were not for the happiness of those who obeyed them, and this Sermon on the Mount ends with a parable story:

"Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds







## THE TWELVE APOSTLES

blew and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

“And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.

“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Jesus loved to give His teaching in stories and in illustrations from nature, and He found that people understood more easily when He told them what we call parables. As we pass along, we shall hear some of them.

## CHAPTER 12

### A ROMAN OFFICER

THERE was a certain Roman officer, a Centurion, who had command over a hundred (or a century) of soldiers. Now, it came about that he was very anxious over a servant, or possibly a slave, whom he loved very dearly, who was so ill with the palsy that he was at death's door. He heard of this Jewish prophet, who was healing so marvellously, but, not being a Jew, he decided to ask the Elders of the Jews in Capernaum to speak to Jesus on his behalf.

The Elders must have been surprised and gratified at such a request. They made haste to come to Jesus, and explained that the Roman Centurion besought Him to go at once to heal his servant. They told Jesus that the Centurion was well worthy of help for he had shown that he loved the Jewish nation, and had actually built them a synagogue.

So Jesus went with the Elders; but when they came near to the Centurion's house the officer himself came out, and spoke very respectfully to Jesus.

## A ROMAN OFFICER

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man 'Go' and he goeth, and to another 'Come' and he cometh, and to my servant 'Do this,' and he doeth it!"

Jesus understood in a moment that the Centurion meant that just as he could order his soldiers, his servants, and his slaves, so Jesus was in authority to command disease. And Jesus marvelled as he heard the officer's words, and He said to the Elders and others who followed Him, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." Then, turning to the Centurion, he said, "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

And the servant was healed from that very hour.

## CHAPTER 13

### A MESSAGE FROM JOHIN

ONE day Jesus was in Nain, which lies on the northern border of the plain of Esdraclon, and presently he turned at the sound of wild lamentations and cries of women's voices.

He knew well what they meant. A funeral was passing, and a crowd was following, and all were full of sympathy for the widow, for she had lost her only son. The young man was lying on a bier and they were carrying him out through the gate of the city.

And when Jesus saw the sorrowing widow, he was full of compassion on her and said gently, "Weep not!"

But how could she help weeping, when her only son was dead! So Jesus touched the bier with authority, and those who bore it stood quite still.

"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!"

Who was speaking with such power? Who was commanding the spirit that had left the young man's cold body to return?

The young man raised himself, and began to speak. And a great terror came on all the people. But Jesus helped the young man, and then he delivered him to his mother.

## A MESSAGE FROM JOHN

And the people glorified God, saying, "A great prophet is risen amongst us, and God hath visited His people."

This miracle of raising the dead made much excitement and talk in Judæa; and the disciples of John heard of it, and they took the news of Jesus and His great works to their master, now so lonely in the prison of Machærus by the Dead Sea.

John listened to the news, yet we ought not to be surprised that his brave heart was troubled. He, the Forerunner, found a strange doubt eating into his soul. So he sent off two of his disciples to Jesus, and told them to ask, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?"

How well Jesus must have understood, and how deeply He must have sympathised with his cousin, but a year or so older than Himself. John was enduring his lot, and asked nothing for himself. His only anxiety was as to whether the Messiah, Whom he had proclaimed, had really come.

Jesus soon set the doubt at rest.

"Go," he said, "and show John these things that ye do see and hear. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them."

John's disciples were fully satisfied, and they must have parted from Jesus much comforted, to carry loving messages to their master.

And when John's disciples had gone, Jesus was deeply moved, and He broke out in loyal praise of John.

"What went ye out into the wilderness to see?" He cried. "A reed shaken with the wind? What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses.

"But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yes, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, 'Behold I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.'

"Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

## A MESSAGE FROM JOHN

By this last sentence Jesus meant that John was the last of the line of the Prophets of old, and that the new Kingdom of Heaven was greater than the old.

Then Jesus uttered a word of solemn warning to the leaders of the Jews, who would neither believe John, who lived on locusts and honey and water, nor on Himself, whom they called a friend of tax-collectors and sinners, the friend of the poor, the sad and the wicked. Jesus began to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works had been done, because they repented not.

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down into hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. And I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the judgment, than for thee!"

And now the people noticed that Jesus had raised His eyes to heaven, and was praying. "I thank thee, Father!" He cried, "Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes!"

And here follows a great appeal of tenderness and love:

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

And what did happen to those towns?

Let Dr. Fosdick tell us in his *Pilgrimage to Palestine*:

"To-day, the towns have vanished that the Master knew, except Tiberias; the trees have fallen and the hills are bare; where gardens grew are morasses, and the lake itself is empty of sails, and the shores idle and untenanted. Only the outlines of unaided nature remain to indicate the setting of the Master's ministry. The lake is lovely still. Sunrise and sunset and the full moon on its restless waters are as Jesus saw them. These hills knew His prayerful vigils, and the Jordan still pours down its flood from Hermon's

## A MESSAGE FROM JOHN

snows, but the civilisation that once prospered here is gone. At Bethsaida, with Bedouin tents to mark the site, at the country of the Gerasencs, with swamps now underneath its beetling unpopulated headland, at Capernaum, with its tumbled ruin, or Chorazin on its barren hill—everywhere one finds that the things which were seen have proved temporal and only the unseen is eternal.”

## CHAPTER 14

### THREE PARABLES

JESUS was sitting in one of the fishing boats, and the people were crowding on the shore, listening; and He said:

“Behold a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

And this is what Jesus told His disciples that the parable meant.

“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside.

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

“He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth

### THREE PARABLES

the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

"But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirtyfold."

Another parable He put forth unto them saying:

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which indeed is the least of all seeds, and, when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

"Again," said Jesus, "the Kingdom of Heaven is like to a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls, who, when he has found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

It was not strange that a little later, when Jesus returned to His own country, the people were astonished at His teaching; and yet they doubted Him.

"Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" they argued together. "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers, James and Joses and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not with us?"

And they were offended in Jesus; but Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own home."

And Jesus did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

## CHAPTER 15

### A STORM AND A GREAT CALM

JESUS had been preaching to great crowds, and explaining His parables to His disciples; and when the evening came He longed for quiet and rest.

"Let us," said Jesus, "pass over unto the other side."



## A STORM AND A GREAT CALM

They were to leave the crowded western shore of the lake, and go over to the wilder and lonelier district of the Gadarenes. There was a Greek city named Gadara, a few miles away, but much of the country was uninhabited.

So when the disciples had sent the multitude away, they took Jesus down to the shore, and placed Him in one of their ships and some other ships set sail with them. The sun was setting and the lake was peaceful, and Jesus rested in the stern of the ship and fell fast asleep. The Sea of Galilee was noted for the sudden storms which tore down from the mountains, and the ships had not gone far before there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

But Jesus slept on, until some of them awaked Him, and cried, "Master, carest thou not that we perish ? "

So Jesus arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, "Peace, be still!"

And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

And Jesus said to them, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

What could they answer?

The storm was over, and the ship was passing tranquilly over the quiet water. Their hearts were full of wonder and fear, and they said to one another, "What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

We should like to think that Jesus lay down again and slept.

As for the other ships, they too had felt the storm and the calm, and the men in them were utterly astonished as to what had happened.

## CHAPTER 16

### JESUS RESCUES A DEMONIAK

THERE are sometimes worse storms inside a man than on the sea, and when next morning Jesus arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, he was met by a poor demoniac, who was the terror of the countryside.

## JESUS RESCUES A DEMONIAK

A demoniak is a man whom we should call mad, or not in his right and true senses. Such a man was in those days said to have an unclean spirit, and to have a demon living within him.

In one account of this incident there are two demoniaks, and probably the one we are now to hear about was the most conspicuous one. He lived amongst the rocky caves and tombs, and even when captured and bound with chains, he broke the chains and threw them away. No one could tame him. No one could help him. Night and day he was in the mountains, crying terrible cries, and cutting himself with stones until the blood ran.

And then it happened that one day this poor man saw Jesus. Jesus was still a long way off, but something within the man made him run right to where He was.

Others who saw him running must have feared that Jesus was in danger; but Jesus was not afraid, and He waited until the man reached Him.

The man knelt down and worshipped Jesus, and cried with a loud voice, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not."

Jesus knew quite well that that was not the real man speaking but the madness or unclean spirit, so he said, "What is thy name?"

"My name is Legion," answered the man, "for we are many."

Here we come to a still stranger part of the story, which it is difficult for us to understand; but we must take it as we find it

This "Legion" did not wish to be sent forth out of the country but asked Jesus if they might enter into a herd of swine that were feeding on the mountain. Jesus gave permission, for it was the poor demoniak He wished to rescue from this evil power.

So the unclean spirits came out of the man, and entered into the swine; and the swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea and were choked. Then those who kept the swine fled away, and told the news in the city and the country, and people came flocking out to find what had happened.

But when they reached Jesus they found the man of whom they had been so terrified sitting wearing clothes and in his right mind. The sight filled them with a strange fear, and they began to pray





## JESUS RESCUES A DEMONIAC

Jesus to go away from that part of the country. These people were probably not Jews, but Gentiles, and the cured demoniac may have been a Gentile, but that we do not know.

Jesus agreed to go away, and went down to the sea shore and entered the ship; and now the man prayed that he might go with Jesus, and we shall not be surprised at that. But Jesus had another task for him.

"Go home to thy friends," said Jesus, "and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

So the man obeyed, and he became like a missionary, for he published in the district of Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him.

And all men did marvel.

## CHAPTER 17

### JESUS AND A LITTLE GIRL

Now, as Jesus was down by the lake, with the people crowding about Him, in His own town of Capernaum one of the rulers of the synagogue, named Jairus, came up to Him in the greatest distress.

He fell at the feet of Jesus and said, "My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray Thee come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live."

Jesus rose at once, for He must have known Jairus well, and the people, full of excitement, followed in a crowd, so that it was difficult to walk along.

Now there was a woman in the crowd who had once been rich, but she had spent all her money on doctors, hoping that they would heal her of her disease, which she had had for twelve years. Yet instead of being any better she had grown worse.

If only Jesus could help her!

She did not wish to push herself forward before this crowd of eager, inquisitive people, but she thought to herself, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be made whole!"

## JESUS AND A LITTLE GIRL

So she pushed nearer and nearer, and at last she could reach out her hand. She touched Jesus' cloak, and then she shrank back, hoping to escape without so much as speaking to the wonderful Prophet. But in a moment she felt within herself that she was healed of her plague.

No one in that crowd knew what had happened. But Jesus knew for He felt within Himself that a healing power had gone out from Him. He turned himself round in the press and said, "Who touched Me?"

His disciples, who did not always understand, said, "Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, 'Who touched Me'!"

Jesus looked round to find who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth.

And Jesus said kindly, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole from thy plague."

How the woman must have thanked Him! Again Jesus was called to speak to messengers from the ruler's house. They were already saying to their lord, "Thy daughter is dead. Why troublest thou the Master any further?"

As Jesus looked towards the heart-broken father, He said calmly, "Be not afraid; only believe"

He dismissed the crowd, and chose out Peter, James, and John, to follow Him to the ruler's house.

Here he found the usual tumult when death comes. Women, paid to mourn, had already arrived, and were screaming and wailing in honour of the dead child

"Why make ye this ado and weep?" He said unto them. "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth."

And they laughed Him to scorn.

But Jesus knew what He wished, and, having put them all out, He took the father and the mother, and Peter, James, and John, into the room where the damsel was lying.

And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her: "Talitha cumi;" which is, being interpreted: "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise."

## JESUS AND A LITTLE GIRL

And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years.

And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

Jesus charged the parents not to proclaim what had happened, and to be sure to give the little girl something to eat.

## CHAPTER 18

### THE DEATH OF JOHN

JESUS now felt that the time had come when His message must be spread more widely than could be done by Himself alone. So he sent out His twelve disciples, two and two, and gave them power to preach, to heal, and to cast out unclean spirits.

They were to go forth as very poor pilgrims, wearing sandals, and taking neither food nor money with them. They were to depend upon the hospitality of those they visited, and if a household would not receive them, Jesus said, "Shake off the dust under your feet, for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city."

So the disciples went forth, and preached that men should repent; and they cast out evil spirits, and anointed the sick with oil and healed them. Jesus was left alone to go on with his great work.

In Herod's city of Tiberias a terrible thing had happened. John was still in his prison, for Herod kept him safely there, as Herodias, his unlawful wife, would have killed John if she could. For Herod, in fact, feared John, for he knew that he was a just man and a holy man, and he liked to listen to him at times.

Herod had given a great feast to his lords, his high captains, and leading men in Galilee. It was the custom for dancing girls to come in and dance before the guests, and Herodias' daughter came in and danced so beautifully that Herod and all the guests were enchanted; and Herod, in a rash moment, called the girl, and said, "Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it to

## THE DEATH OF JOHN

thee." And he sware unto her, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee unto the half of my kingdom."

The girl instantly rushed off to consult her mother as to what she should ask, and her mother, seeing her chance of revenge against John, answered, "Ask of the king the head of John the Baptist."

This young girl does not seem to have been shocked at her mother's answer, and she went straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, "I will that thou give me, by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist."

And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes that sat with him, he would not reject her.

And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded the head to be brought; and the executioner went and beheaded John in the prison. This young girl's request is one of the most horrible in history, yet Herod thought that it would disgrace him more to break his oath than to murder an innocent man.

John was in prison in his dreary dungeon, thirsting for freedom, wondering why he had been denied a share in the work which Jesus and His disciples were doing.

The door burst open. The jailer entered, followed by the executioner. Probably both men were disgusted at the command they were bound to obey. Perhaps they were surprised that their enfeebled prisoner was not afraid.

What was death? To John, it was the very freedom for which he had yearned. It was a more glorious freedom than any he could find on the wild places of Judæa.

He bowed before the executioner. His head was severed from his body, and his spirit rose and passed through those dungeon walls to God. What did it matter that his poor head was laid on a charger, and carried by a young girl to her mother?

From that moment Herod had no peace. He could not get the murdered prophet out of his mind, and when he now heard of the triumphs of Jesus, and how His disciples were touring the country, preaching and healing, he was terror stricken, wondering whether perhaps John had risen from the dead.

John's disciples were allowed to take the body of their beloved



## THE DEATH OF JOHN

master from the prison, and they buried it in all honour. Then, their hearts swelling with grief, they hurried off to Galilee to tell Jesus.

The brave "Messenger" had been taken, and Jesus knew that His own hour would come, to be cast out from amongst men.

But now His twelve apostles had returned, and they had much to tell Him of all they had done; and Jesus said to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile;" for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure to eat. So they departed into a desert place by ship privately. But the people saw them departing, and many knew Jesus, and ran afoot from the cities, and outwent the ship, so that when He and His disciples landed, instead of a lonely spot they found a vast crowd waiting for them.

Surely this was a moment for Jesus to be angry? But, instead of being impatient, His heart was moved with compassion for He looked upon them as sheep without a shepherd.

## CHAPTER 19

### A LONG TIRING DAY

ALL that day, out on the hillside, Jesus taught the eager and enthusiastic people. We have no account of what He said; but we know that He spoke parables, and tried to make clear to them what He meant by the Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of heaven.

Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Way, the Vine, the Light of the World, the Truth, the Good Shepherd; and He even compared Himself to an anxious hen, spreading out her wings, longing to gather her chickens under her wings, while the disobedient chickens run away and refuse to come.

The disciples were not so patient as their Master, and, as the day drew to a close, they came and interrupted Him.

"This is a desert place," they said, "and now the time is far passed. Send the people away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat."

## A LONG TIRING DAY

Jesus answered, "Give ye them to eat."

And Philip, one of the disciples, answered, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little."

But Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?"

And Jesus said, "Make the people sit down."

There was much grass in the place, and the people sat or lay in companies or groups.

How surprised and proud the lad must have been when he found that the wonderful teacher needed his loaves and fishes. Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

When they had had enough, Jesus said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

When therefore the people had seen the miracle that Jesus did, they said, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."

We shall remember that, when hungry Himself, Jesus had refused to turn stones into bread at the command of Satan. But for these men, women, and children, He could call upon His Father to turn a generous lad's loaves and fishes into food for a multitude.

In our next chapter we shall see that this miracle was, in some ways, a turning point in the life of Jesus.

## CHAPTER 20

### A KING BY THE SWORD?

Now, excitement was gathering from Galilee to Judæa about Jesus. Was He, or was He not the King of the Jews, who was to deliver the nation out of the hands of the Romans? The Passover

## A KING BY THE SWORD?

at Jerusalem was approaching, when vast numbers of Jews would assemble from distant lands, and it would be well to get this question settled.

The fierce, passionate Galilæans and others who formed the party of the Zealots, were only too anxiously watching for a chance to set on foot an armed rising. The nation knew it, the Romans knew it; Herod knew it, and it is necessary to understand that, as learned men tell us, had Jesus agreed to lead the Jewish Nation in revolt, there was every possibility that He would have overcome Rome.

The Jews were an intensely warlike nation, and though they were usually exempted from service in the Roman armies, they were noted volunteers in different countries. The Romans knew from experience how well and doggedly the Jews could fight, careless of wounds, fearless of death, and they dreaded to rouse them. Roman officials did their utmost to keep Jerusalem quiet, for disturbance in Jerusalem meant danger amongst the Jews in other parts of their empire.

The Zealots had failed so far—not because they were not brave, but because they had no leader whom they could all trust. But what of this young Galilæan, who could calm a storm, raise the dead, cure all disease, and actually feed five thousand people from five loaves and two fishes? Had He not been proclaimed by John the Baptist as the Coming One? Why should they not place Him at their head and win Him a throne?

As they consulted together under the dying day, they made up their minds. The hour had come. They would force Jesus to become a King. And Jesus, watching and knowing what thoughts were in their minds, must have been moved in spirit. How He loved these eager-hearted young Zealots!

Yet in offering him a throne, by the force of their own strong arms, and the spilling of the blood of other children of His Father, they were presenting the same temptation to Jesus as Satan had once presented in the Wilderness. Satan had promised Jesus all the world, if He would but bow down and worship him.

We do not know what the people actually said to Jesus, but they crowded about him, and wished then and there to set Him up as their king and leader. It must have been very hard to Him to

## A KING BY THE SWORD?

disappoint them, and to explain that they had misunderstood what He meant by the Kingdom of God. Even the disciples must have been troubled and disappointed for they had been indulging in great ambitions for their beloved Master

Judas Iscariot was very ambitious, and he must have begun to think out his position more seriously. What was the good of following Jesus, if He was going to refuse to become the King of the Jews, and to raise His disciples to power? It was a sad moment of division, and Jesus, loving His nation, and loving the wide world as He did, longed for a time of quiet, alone with His Father

Jesus told His disciples to go on before Him across the Lake, while He sent the multitude away. So the disciples went down to the shore, and, by and by, the crowds left Jesus, and went off, talking and murmuring and arguing and wondering. Jesus was left alone on the hillside, and it grew darker and darker.

There are many secret moments in the life of Jesus, which are impossible for us to understand. All we know here is that Jesus was speaking to His Heavenly Father, and that it was dark. It was also dark on the lake, for a storm was rising and the wind blew hard. And Jesus knew that His disciples would need Him before they reached the far shore. It was in vain that they took to their oars and rowed desperately. The wind was contrary. And when the ship was in the midst of the lake, and the fourth watch of the night had come, Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.

And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled saying, "It is a spirit!" and they cried out for fear.

But straightway Jesus spake unto them saying, "Be of good cheer. It is I; be not afraid."

And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water."

And Jesus said, "Come."

And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the boisterous wind he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "Lord, save me!"

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

And when Jesus and Peter had come into the ship, the wind





## A KING BY THE SWORD?

ceased. And they that were in the ship came and worshipped Jesus, saying, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God!"

And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of Jesus, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole.

## CHAPTER 21

### INTO THE GENTILE COUNTRY OF TYRE AND SIDON

A LITTLE later, Jesus went forth out of Galilee into the district of Tyre and Sidon, to help the people there.

And a Canaanitish woman came and cried to Him, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David! My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

But, curiously, Jesus did not answer her with His usual kind readiness, for indeed He was wishing to test her. The disciples misunderstood, and begged Him to send her away, for she was crying out and making a disturbance.

And Jesus said, "I am but sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!"

But the woman came and kneeled and worshipped Jesus, and pleaded for help, "Lord, help me!"

But Jesus answered, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs!"

By this Jesus suggested that He must not take from the Jews to give to the Gentiles.

But the woman was ready with her answer, "Truth Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

How pleased Jesus was with this answer! The woman only counted herself as a dog, yet she claimed the crumbs that fell from the table.

"O woman, great is thy faith!" said Jesus: "be it unto thee even as thou wilt!"

And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.



## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST HINT

**W**E have now reached the end of the first stage in the ministry of Jesus, and we shall notice that He spends more time in teaching His own disciples, yet takes every opportunity to let the outside public, and especially the leaders of the Jews, know the full truth about the message He has brought.

It is difficult for those of us who know what happened in the end, to keep it clear in our minds that the disciples did not know, and the great surprise came upon them as a terrific shock.

Up till now, though there had been opposition to Jesus from Scribes, Pharisees, Herodians, and others, the ministry had, on the whole, been one of triumph. The common people heard Jesus gladly, and those who loved and believed in Him were sure that something very glorious was going to take place. The glory did come, and will come, more and more; but it was not the kind of glory the disciples expected.

Jesus knew that His ministry would be cut off at Easter, and that He must work hard to the very end. Moreover, He must train His disciples in the knowledge that His Father was asking of them a life of toil and brave work, and not one of ease and personal glory. Yet we shall notice that, almost up to the end, they did not understand.

Jesus had been spending some time in the north; and as He and His disciples were walking near Cæsarea Philippi, a city which Herod the Great's son, Philip, had established, Jesus turned and put a blunt and clear question to His companions.



## THE FIRST HINT

"Whom do men say that I am?"

They answered readily enough, "John the Baptist; and some say Elijah, and some say one of the prophets."

"But whom say ye that I am?" He asked.

Peter was ready with his answer: "Thou art the Christ!"

Then Jesus charged them that they were not to proclaim that He was the Christ, for this knowledge was to be kept for the Twelve and an inner circle of other disciples.

Yet now Jesus felt that it was time that He should tell them what they must expect. The Son of man, as He called Himself, must suffer many things from the elders, the chief priests and the scribes. He would be killed, and on the third day He would rise again.

What was their Master saying? It all sounded so impossible that Peter took it upon himself to rebuke Jesus. But Jesus knew only too well that He was speaking the truth; and He turned about and looked at His disciples, showing them by His expression that He was deeply in earnest, as He said to Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan!"

Jesus explained that Peter was not sensing God's thoughts, but his own. The word "Satan" means adversary, and Peter understood that he was accused of putting himself into opposition to Jesus and hurting Him.

Yet the disciples were very puzzled, for they could not get away from the idea that some wonderful and glorious future was before their Master which they, as His disciples would share.

How was Jesus to help them to understand?

"Whosoever," said Jesus, "will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

"For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works.

"Verily I say unto you, 'There be some standing here which

## THE FIRST HINT

shall not taste of death, till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power.' ”

The disciples and the people standing round listened, but they did not really understand, as we shall see.

## CHAPTER 2

### A MYSTERIOUS SIGHT

JESUS was, as we know, fond of going away alone to pray; but six days after He had warned his disciples of His coming death, He surprised Peter, James, and John by inviting them to go up into a high mountain, apart with Him. No one knows which mountain this was, but it is thought to be one of the heights on the Hermon range.

At a certain moment, Jesus was “transfigured” before His disciples, for His whole appearance was changed. This is one of the mystery incidents, which we can no more understand than we could understand what happened when Jacob wrestled with an Angel, when Moses talked with Jehovah until his own face shone with glory, nor when Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven.

But the three disciples saw that their Master’s face shone as the sun, and that His raiment was white as the light and glistening. And behold, there appeared Moses and Elias (or Eljah), talking with Jesus.

Quite bewildered at what they saw, Peter spoke out the first thought that came to his mind, not really knowing what he was saying: “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”

Just before, Peter, James, and John had been heavy with sleep, and now a bright cloud overshadowed Jesus, Moses, and Elias, and the disciples feared as they entered into it.

And now a voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him.”

And when the disciples heard the voice, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid.

## A MYSTERIOUS SIGHT

We do not know how long it was before Jesus came up to them and touched them, and said, "Arise, and be not afraid."

And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. They were alone again with their beloved Master, and the vision had ended.

And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, "Tell this vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead."

What could this rising from the dead mean? They would know one day, but they did not understand then.

And as they walked on, the disciples ventured to ask Jesus a question: "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?"

Jesus explained that Elias had already come, but that he had not been recognised or received, and that as Elias had suffered, so the Son of man would also suffer.

Then the three understood that Jesus spoke of John the Baptist, as the Elias who had come and had suffered.

Now, when Jesus, Peter, James, and John returned to the other disciples at the foot of the mountain, a man came to Jesus in great distress.

He kneeled to Him and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed; for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him."

Then Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to Me."

And when the child was brought, Jesus rebuked the devil that was distressing him, and sent him out, and the child was cured from that very hour.

The disciples were greatly disturbed at their failure, and they said to Jesus, "Why could not we cast him out?"

"Because of your unbelief," answered Jesus. "For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, 'Remove hence to yonder place,' and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

The moving of the mountain was a parable picture, as the disciples would understand.

## JESUS TALKS TO HIS DISCIPLES

### CHAPTER 3

#### JESUS TALKS TO HIS DISCIPLES

ONE day the disciples came to Jesus to ask Him a question on a subject upon which they had been arguing.

"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" they asked.

The question showed how utterly they had misunderstood their Master, and Jesus called a little child to Him, and set him in the midst of these ambitious disciples.

"Verily, I say into you," he answered, "except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

And now Peter had a question to ask: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"

Jesus gave Peter an astounding answer, and then told a parable to show what He meant.

"I say not unto thee until seven times; but until seventy-times seven.

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he could not pay, the king commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment be made.

(Ten thousand talents was a huge sum, working out at three to four million pounds).

"The servant therefore fell down and besought the king, saying, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.'

"Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

"But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence," (about three pounds ten shillings), "and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat saying, 'Pay me what thou owest.'

## JESUS TALKS TO HIS DISCIPLES

"And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.'

"And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

"So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told their lord all that was done.

"Then his lord, after he had called him, said unto him, 'O thou wicked servant! I forgive thee all thy debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldest thou not have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?'

"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

"So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

In the Lord's Prayer we say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

## CHAPTER 4

### ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM

THE Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand, when the people gathered to Jerusalem, and lived in booths round about the city, in remembrance of the wilderness days. This feast was held in the autumn, and many were exciting themselves as to whether the new Prophet would be there.

The leaders in Judæa made no secret of their wish to kill Jesus, and for some time He had been out of Judæa, in Galilee and the north and east of the Jordan. Yet He knew that He must face Jerusalem, and all that would happen to Him there.

On one occasion He set out for Jerusalem, taking the route through Samaria; and He sent some of His disciples in front into a village, that they might make ready for His arrival. But when the Samaritans heard that the travellers were on their way to Jerusalem, they were jealous and unfriendly, and when Jesus

## ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM

arrived, they refused Him the common hospitality of food and lodging for the night.

James and John were very angry—so angry that they wished to command fire to come down from heaven to consume the Samaritans.

But Jesus would have no action like that.

"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of!" he said. "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Jesus had already told them that if any one smote them on the one cheek, they were to turn the other. The Samaritans had offered a dire insult, but there must be no revenge. So, though they were tired and hungry, they turned away and walked on to another village.

## CHAPTER 5

### AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

THE Feast of Tabernacles was in full swing, some of Jesus's brothers had already arrived, and the people were talking eagerly about Jesus, and wondering whether He would dare to face the danger which was openly spoken about.

"Where is He?" was asked.

Now, the ordinary Jews were greatly divided about Him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others said, "Nay, but He deceiveth the people."

But no one dared to speak too openly, for fear of getting into trouble with the leaders of the Jews.

The Feast lasted for eight days; and about the middle of that time, lo, there was Jesus, sitting calmly in the Temple, teaching quite openly, as though He, at least, had nothing to fear.

"Is this not He, whom they seek to kill?" people asked. "But lo, He speaketh boldly, and the rulers say nothing unto Him. Do they know indeed that this is the very Christ?" But they were puzzled, for they thought they knew all about Jesus of Nazareth,







## AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

and they said, "But when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is."

Jesus knew what they were saying and thinking, and He broke off from His teaching and cried, "Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am; and I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not."

Some of them were infuriated with these words, and would have liked, then and there, to have arrested Jesus. But no one touched Him, for the hour when He was to be arrested had not yet come.

"When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than those this man hath done?" asked others doubtfully.

As for the Pharisees and the chief priests, they did actually send officers to take Him, but the officers could not.

It was on the last day, the greatest day of the feast, that Jesus stood out before them all and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

As the people saw this amazing young Prophet, many of them were almost convinced.

"Of a truth, this is the Prophet."

But others said, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that Christ cometh from the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"

So there was a division among the people because of Him. And it appears from the story that no one remembered that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem.

When the officers returned to the chief priests and Pharisees, they were asked disappointedly, "Why have ye not brought Him?"

The officers answered, "Never man spake like this Man!"

"Are ye also deceived?" retorted the Pharisees. "Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed on Him? But these common people, who do not understand the law, are accursed!"

There was one Pharisee there, named Nicodemus, who had once been to Jesus by night, and Jesus had had a long conversation with him. He had not yet come out openly for Jesus, but he now remonstrated, and said, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"

They turned on Nicodemus hotly enough, "Art thou also of

## AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

These men in authority went to their own homes; but that night, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, the hill outside Jerusalem, which He was learning to love.

There in the darkness and the quiet, Jesus talked to His Father in heaven, and gained strength and knowledge for the difficult days which were coming.

## CHAPTER 6

### JESUS IS AGAIN ATTACKED

JESUS, on the following day, again went to the Temple and continued His teaching; and the scribes and Pharisees watched Him and argued, seeking to find a reason for arresting Him.

"I am the light of the world," said Jesus with all authority. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

"Thou bearest record of Thyself," returned the Pharisees, "and Thy record is not true!"

"Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true," said Jesus, "for I know whence I came, and whither I go."

As the argument went on, many of the Jews believed on Jesus; and He said to them, "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed. Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

But the unbelievers were more angry than ever at hearing this, and they cried, "We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man."

"If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill Me, a man Who hath told you the truth, which I have heard from God. This did not Abraham."

"If God were your father," went on Jesus, "ye would love Me, for I am come forth from God, neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me."

## JESUS IS AGAIN ATTACKED

So the argument continued, backwards and forwards, and the Jews cried at last, "Art Thou greater than our Father Abraham, which is dead, and the prophets are dead; whom makest Thou Thyself?"

"If I honour Myself, My honour is nothing," said Jesus. "It is My Father that honoureth Me, of Whom ye say that He is your God. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

"Thou art not yet fifty years old!" they mocked, "and hast Thou seen Abraham?"

"Verily, verily I say unto you," said Jesus solemnly, "before Abraham was, I am!"

We shall remember that Jehovah once told Moses that His name was "I am" or "I will be, that I will be."

Then they took up stones to cast at Jesus. But Jesus hid Himself, going through the midst of them, and so passing out of the Temple.

## CHAPTER 7

### A LOYAL BLIND MAN

THIS is a great story, not only because of the way it is told, but because it gives us a picture of the terrific opposition which was rising against Jesus amongst the Jewish leaders.

One Sabbath day, Jesus had healed a man who had been born blind; and as the man passed along, utterly astonished at the sight of the world, the neighbours said to one another, "Is not this the blind man that sat and begged?"

"I am he," said the man.

"How were thine eyes opened?" they asked.

"A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, 'Go to the Pool of Siloam and wash.' And I went and washed, and I received sight."

"Where is He?" they asked.

"I know not," said the man, for he had not seen Jesus.

## A LOYAL BLIND MAN

So the neighbours brought the man to the Pharisees, who questioned him as to what had happened.

"This man is not of God," said one of the Pharisees, "because He keepeth not the Sabbath day."

Others said, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" and there was a division amongst them.

So they asked the man again, "What sayest thou of Him that hath opened thine eyes?"

"He is a Prophet," said the man boldly.

But the Jews would not believe that this man had been born blind so they called his parents, who were very anxious and afraid.

"Is this your son," they asked, "who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see?"

Now, the rumour had spread that the Jews had agreed that if any man confessed that Jesus was the Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue and not allowed to take part in the religious worship; so the parents answered very cautiously, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes we know not. He is of age, ask him; he shall speak for himself."

So they called in the man again and said, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner."

"Whether He be a sinner or not, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see!"

"What did He to thee; how opened He thine eyes?"

"I have told you already," exclaimed the man, still more boldly, "and ye did not hear. Wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be His disciples?"

Then the Jews were angry, and reviled the man and said, "Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake by Moses, but as for this fellow, we know not whence He is."

"Why, herein is a marvellous thing," cried the man, "that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes! Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing."

## A LOYAL BLIND MAN

"Thou wast altogether born in sin!" they answered, "and dost thou teach us?" and then and there they turned him out of the synagogue.

But Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and He found him, and asked a great question.

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

"Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?"

"Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee," answered Jesus

Then the man worshipped Jesus and said, "Lord, I believe!"

## CHAPTER 8

### THE SEVENTY DISCIPLES

JESUS had gathered a large number of people in different parts of Judæa and Galilee, and even further afield, who believed in Him; and as He knew that the time was short, before He would return to His Father, He sent out seventy disciples He could trust, two by two, that they might spread the news that He was on His way.

"The harvest truly is great," He said, "but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest. Go your ways; behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves."

Jesus gave them much the same direction as He had once given to the Twelve; and when these Seventy returned to Jesus they were full of joy.

"Lord, even the devils are subject unto us, through Thy name," they reported.

"I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven!" said Jesus. We do not quite know what Jesus meant by this, but it was a picture to show that wherever His message was received, the power of evil was broken. "Notwithstanding," He added, "rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven."

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank Thee,

## THE SEVENTY DISCIPLES

O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

A little later He turned to His disciples and said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

## CHAPTER 9

### THE GOOD SAMARITAN

ONE day a lawyer came to Jesus to ask Him a question which might tempt or confuse Him.

"Master," he said, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus knew he was a lawyer, so He answered, "What is written in the law? How readeest thou?"

The lawyer answered readily, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

These words were quoted from Deuteronomy and Leviticus, as both Jesus and the lawyer knew.

"Thou hast answered right," said Jesus. "This do, and thou shalt live."

But the lawyer did not want such a simple yet deep answer as that; and wishing to find an excuse for himself—for he knew quite well that he had neither loved the Lord his God with all his heart, nor his neighbour as himself—he asked, "And who is my neighbour?"

Then Jesus told a story, which may have been a parable, or it may have been something which actually happened and of which Jesus had heard.

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said, 'Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.'

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?"

The lawyer was obliged to say, "He that showed mercy on him."

Then said Jesus unto him, "Go and do thou likewise."

As the people listened, they must have noticed that it was the Samaritan, with whom they hated to have any dealings, who had done the kindness to the Jew.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE HOME IN BETHANY

WE cannot know all the friends whom Jesus made during His ministry, nor how many gave Him help and hospitality and loving care; but we are sure that He drew out love from very many, as He was always ready to love and to help.

Now, in the village of Bethany, which lay on the east side of the Mount of Olives, there lived a brother and two sisters, who were always glad to have Jesus in their home. The brother's name was Lazarus, and the elder sister was named Martha, and the younger sister was named Mary. It appears as though the house belonged to Martha, and it was a great joy to Jesus to come for rest and quiet, out of the way of the crowds, to this happy home.

Martha and Mary were different in nature. Martha liked to be

## THE HOME IN BETHANY

busy, doing things, and to bring the very best she could to Jesus. Mary was more anxious not to miss a single word that Jesus had to say.

One day, Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, dost Thou not care, that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

Now Jesus loved both Martha and Mary, and He answered kindly enough, "Martha, Martha! Thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her "

The Bible does not tell us any more of this particular incident, nor what led up to it, and it reads as though Mary had been selfish and left Martha to do all the work. But it is clear that Jesus would have been happier if Martha had thought less of caring for His bodily needs, and had wished, like Mary, to take time to listen to what He was longing to teach.

We shall hope that Mary did rise up and help her sister, and soon we shall meet this family again.

## CHAPTER II

### IN SOLOMON'S PORCH

It was winter, and Jesus had come to Jerusalem, to be at the Feast of the Dedication. This was the Feast which was held in memory of the re-dedication of the Temple, after it had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes, about which we read in the History Bridge which we made between the Old and the New Testaments.

The Seventy had been out and had returned, Jesus had been active in His mighty works and teachings, and the leaders of the Jews were getting increasingly anxious. Jesus was not afraid to face Jerusalem once more, and as He walked in the Temple, in Solomon's porch, the leading Jews came up to Him and demanded of Him an answer to the one question which everyone was asking.

"How long dost thou make us to doubt?" they said. "If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."





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## IN SOLOMON'S PORCH

"I told you," said Jesus, "but ye believed not. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

And at that, the Jews picked up stones ready to stone Jesus. But He was not afraid, and waited quietly facing them as they stood with the stones in their hands.

"Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of these works do ye stone Me?"

The Jews answered, "For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God."

Again Jesus argued with them, and ended by saying, "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him."

So the Jews tried again to arrest Jesus, but He escaped out of their hand.

## CHAPTER 12

### BEYOND JORDAN

THE time had not yet come for Jesus to allow the Jews to arrest Him, and He now passed beyond Jordan to the district where John had first baptized.

Here he stayed, and again the people flocked to Him.

"John did no miracle," said the people to one another, "but all things that John spake of this man were true."

So many believed on Jesus, and learned to love Him.

One day certain of the Pharisees came to Jesus, and said to Him, "Get Thee out and depart hence; for Herod will kill Thee."

## BEYOND JORDAN

The warning may or may not have been kindly meant, but Jesus returned a fearless answer. "Go ye, and tell that fox, 'Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and on the third day I finish My course. Nevertheless I must continue My journey, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.'"

Jesus meant that He could not alter any plan because there was danger. Indeed He was proposing to walk into more danger.

Then He broke out into a lament which we shall hear again:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

"Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

It was when Jesus was preaching in Peræa, beyond Jordan, that the tax-collectors and sinners came near, so that they might hear the Prophet. These people were friendly with Jesus, and invited Him to their homes, and offered Him hospitality, and this made the Pharisees and scribes murmur together and say, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

Then Jesus spoke three of His most wonderful parables, in answer to this complaint.

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it?"

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.'"

"I say unto you, likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just or blameless people who do not need to repent."

"Either what woman, having ten silver coins, if she lose one of them, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it?"

"And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.' Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

## BEYOND JORDAN

Then, to make His point still clearer, Jesus added yet another parable:

"A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me,' and he divided unto them his living.

"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants.'

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

"And the son said to him, 'Father I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.'

"But the father said to the servants, 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet! And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

"Now the elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

"And he said unto him, 'Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.'

"And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore his father came out and entreated him.

"And he, answering, said to his father, 'Lo, these many years

## BEYOND JORDAN

do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as thy son was come which hath wasted thy living, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.'

"And he said unto him, 'Son thou art ever with me, and all I have is thine. It was good that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found.'"

## CHAPTER 13

### AN URGENT CALL

ONE day Jesus received an urgent call from Martha and Mary to go at once to Bethany. Their brother Lazarus was very ill.

"Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick."

"This sickness," said Jesus, "is not unto death; but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

Now though it was well known that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, His disciples were astonished that He remained two days where He was, as though there were no hurry to go to help His friends.

On the third day He said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judæa again."

But suddenly the disciples became anxious and afraid; for Judæa was the place of danger for their Master.

"Master," they remonstrated, "the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?"

"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," said Jesus. "But I go, that I may awake him out of his sleep."

"Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well," they answered.

But Jesus spoke of his death; they thought He had spoken of the taking of rest in sleep. Then Jesus said unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that ye may believe. Nevertheless, let us go unto him."

The disciples were quite right in thinking that there was

## AN URGENT CALL

extreme danger for Jesus in returning to Judæa, but the will of their Master must be done.

Thomas called the disciples aside, and said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

Meanwhile, many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in their grief, and by the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been in the grave four days.

As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she left Mary in the house, and hurried away to meet Him; and as soon as she saw Him, she broke out pitifully, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee."

"Thy brother shall rise again," said Jesus gently.

"I know that he shall rise again," said poor Martha, "at the resurrection at the last day."

Then Jesus said something which neither we nor Martha can quite understand, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

"Yea, Lord," said Martha, "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Then Martha left Jesus and rushed back to her sister Mary, and spoke to her secretly, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

So Mary rose up quickly, and went outside the town, to the place where Jesus was waiting. But the friends who saw her go thought that she was going to weep at the grave, so they followed her.

When Mary came to Jesus, she fell down at His feet and said:

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

She said just what Martha had said, as though the sorrowful sisters had talked it all over with one another.

And when Jesus saw her weeping, and her friends weeping, he groaned in spirit, and was troubled.

"Where have ye laid him?" he asked

"Come and see," Mary answered.

And as Jesus followed, He wept.

"Behold how He loved him!" said the friends, and some of them added:

## AN URGENT CALL

"Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Jesus, therefore, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, against which a stone had been laid.

"Take ye away the stone!" commanded Jesus. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid, and Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said:

"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me; and I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

After the prayer, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin.

"Loose him, and let him go" commanded Jesus.

And when those standing round saw Lazarus restored to life and strength, as though he had not died, they believed on Jesus.

But not all; for some went off to the Pharisees, to tell what Jesus had done and to make mischief. So it was that the chief priests and the Pharisees held a council, and said, "What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. If we let Him alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans shall come and take away our city and our nation."

We must not altogether blame the Council for thinking like this. If Jesus were indeed the Messiah, might it not mean that there would be a great insurrection, and an armed rebellion which would bring down upon them all the strength of the great Roman armies?

The tragic part of it was that they had so misunderstood Jesus. He was indeed the Messiah, the Christ, come from God. But He had not come to destroy men's lives but to save. He had come to teach men the way of Life, as children of His heavenly Father.

So the council consulted; and the High Priest for that year, whose name was Caiaphas, said, "Ye know nothing about it, and ye do not consider that it would be better for one man to die, than for the whole nation to perish."



## AN URGENT CALL

From that time onwards they worked more and more seriously to put Jesus to death. But Jesus knew that the time had not yet come for Him to die; so He went away northwards from Jerusalem to a town named Ephraim, and stayed there with His disciples.

### CHAPTER 14

#### EAST OF THE JORDAN

JESUS knew that during the Passover week His life on earth would end, and that He would return to His Father. There was only a very short time left, and He went on healing and teaching, so that nothing possible should be left undone.

One day He spoke a parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and who despised others:

"Two men went into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-collector.

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are . . . or even as this tax-collector. I fast twice in the week, I give away a tenth part of all I possess.'

"And the Tax-collector, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'

"I tell you, that this man went down to his house forgiven, rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

It was at this time that the mothers brought the little children to Jesus, so that He might bless them

The disciples wished to send the mothers and children away, for it seemed as though they interrupted the Master in His preaching.

But when Jesus noticed His disciples driving off the children, He was much displeased, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the

## EAST OF THE JORDAN

kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no case enter **therein.**"

Then Jesus drew the children towards Him, and took them up in His arms, and put His hands upon them and blessed them.

We shall like to think that in after years, when Jesus had returned to His Father, these children grew up to love Him, and to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Shortly after this, a young man came running to Jesus, and kneeling, said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

And Jesus replied, "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments?" and Jesus repeated the principal ones.

"Master, all these things I have kept from my youth!" answered the young man. "What lack I yet?"

And Jesus, beholding the young man, loved him, and said earnestly, "If thou wilt be perfect, go thy way, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow Me."

The eager expression on the young man's face faded. He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions.

Whether he ever changed his mind and came back, we do not know.

But Jesus looked round on His disciples and said, "How hard for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God!" The disciples were so astonished at His words, that He added, "Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."

Jesus probably used a common proverb to illustrate the most impossible thing that any one could imagine. But some have suggested that the small gate alongside the great gate of a city is called the 'eye of a needle,' and before camels could squeeze through such a gate, their burdens would have to be taken off.

But however that may be, the disciples understood what Jesus meant, and they were astonished out of measure.

"Who, then, can be saved?" they cried.

Surely the rich had always a better chance than the poor?

*"Suffer little children to come unto Me."*





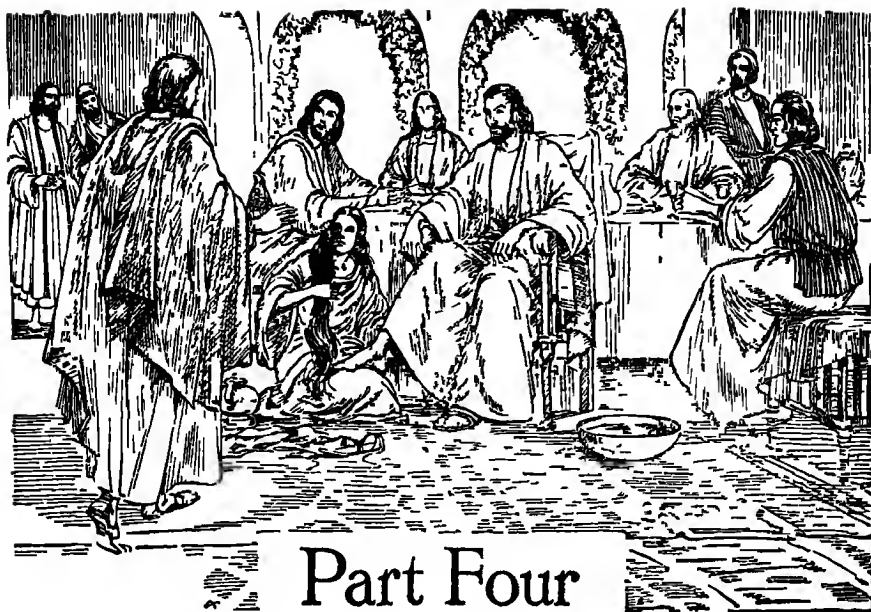
## EAST OF THE JORDAN

"With men it is impossible; but not with God; for with God all things are possible," Jesus answered.

"Lo, we have left all and have followed Thee!" put in Peter.

"Verily I say unto you," said Jesus seriously, "there is no man that hath left house, or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren, and sisters and mothers and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."





## Part Four

### CHAPTER I

#### THE DISCIPLES ARE AFRAID

**T**HE disciples must often have talked together, when Jesus was not with them, wondering what was going to happen. The Passover Feast was at hand. Would Jesus claim the Messiahship—claim to be a king?

The people in the crowds must also have questioned them as to what their Master was going to do. Mary, the mother, must have wondered and been anxious, as she heard how the leaders amongst the Jews were setting themselves against her Son.

Probably three million people were crowding up to Jerusalem for this Passover Feast, which took place in March, A.D. 30. There was great excitement, and much talk amongst the leaders and the people as to whether Jesus of Nazareth was going to use this Festival opportunity to come out openly to lead the Jews to a triumph over the Romans.

## THE DISCIPLES ARE AFRAID

As Jesus and His disciples passed forward on their way to Jerusalem, the disciples noticed that He walked on in front of them, as though He wished to be alone.

There was something in the way He walked and the expression on His face which alarmed them. They had never seen Jesus look as He now looked, and they were filled with fear.

Then Jesus took them aside, and explained to them something of what was going to happen at Jerusalem; but it does not appear as though they really understood or believed Him.

"Behold," said Jesus, "we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death. And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him; and the third day He shall rise again."

Now a short time after Jesus had been speaking like this, the mother of James and John came with her sons, worshipping Jesus and asking a great favour.

"Grant," she said, "that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy Kingdom."

"Ye know not what ye ask!" said Jesus. "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

"We can," they said readily.

Whether they had not understood Jesus, or whether they had faith to look beyond the death of their Master to His glorious resurrection and ascension, is not clear. But they had asked Jesus for an honour which only His Father could grant.

"Ye shall indeed drink of the cup which I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. But to sit on My right hand and on My left, is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared."

The other ten disciples were much displeased with James and John for making this request; and when Jesus knew that they were quarrelling amongst themselves, He called them to Him.

"Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them . . . but it is not so among you; but

## THE DISCIPLES ARE AFRAID

whosoever would become great among you, shall be your servant, and whosoever would be first among you, shall be bondservant of all. For verily the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

The word "minister" meant to "serve" or to "help."

The disciples must indeed have felt ashamed of themselves when they remembered that their own Master was always helping and serving and refusing to think of Himself.

They were on their way to Jericho, and the crowds were following; and as Jesus came near the city, He healed a blind beggar named Bartimæus, whom every one knew. This excited the people greatly, and they gave glory to God.

On entering the city, there was a certain tax-collector named Zacchæus, who was most anxious to see Jesus, but as he was a very short man, he could not do so on account of the crowd. But he was so determined to get his way, that he climbed into a sycamore tree, and waited for Jesus to pass.

Zacchæus was well known in Jericho as a rich man, for he had gained his riches from the profits he made out of the taxes. He had no intention of speaking to Jesus. He only wished to see Him. But as Jesus passed, He looked up into the tree, and astonished him by saying, "Zacchæus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house."

How did Jesus know this man's name? Why did He choose him out as His host? Certainly Zacchæus could not tell; but he came down from the tree, and received Jesus with great joy. He was proud indeed that this miracle-worker and prophet had chosen to visit his home.

The people instantly grumbled, and they said to one another, "He has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner!"

But Zacchæus stood out before them all and declared, "I promise now to give half of my possessions to the poor, and out of the other half to make fourfold restitution of all wrongful exactions of the past."

And Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house, for Zacchæus is also a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."



## THE SUPPER AT BETHANY

### CHAPTER 2

#### THE SUPPER AT BETHANY

THERE was a man named Simon the leper, of whom we know nothing except that he made a feast in honour of Jesus when He arrived in Bethany on His way to Jerusalem. He was probably some relative of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, for Lazarus was one of the guests, and Martha was helping to serve at the feast.

Jesus was there, with the twelve disciples, and we can imagine the table spread, and the guests all round it.

As for Mary, she wished to do Jesus the greatest honour in her power. Was He not her friend and Master, and had He not raised her brother from the dead?

So she took a pound of ointment of spikenard, which was very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the scent of the ointment, so that every one knew what she had done.

Now, Judas Iscariot was in his place amongst the disciples, and we must believe that he was growing more and more disappointed in Jesus. All his hopes for a great deliverance of the Jews from Rome were fading. Jesus was not calling out the young Jews to stand by Him with their swords. He had just told them that He was actually expecting to be done to death at the Passover Feast. What did it all mean?

And now, what was the good of wasting this precious ointment?

And Judas spoke out his thoughts. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had charge of the bag of money that Jesus and the disciples shared together.

Then Jesus said a strange thing to Judas: "Let her alone; against the day of My burying hath she done this. For the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always."

## THE SUPPER AT BETHANY

Again Judas could hear the warning of death, of something like defeat, which Jesus was announcing.

Whether Jesus said this for others to hear we do not know, for a feast was more or less public, and many of the leaders of the Jews were there, not only to see Jesus, but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

And later, when the feast was over, the chief priests consulted together anxiously. Many of the people were believing in Jesus because they saw Lazarus alive—it would be necessary to put Lazarus to death. So the danger for Jesus and His friends grew; but Jesus was not afraid, for He knew that His life was not in the hands of the Jews, but of His Father.

## CHAPTER 3

### PALM SUNDAY

WE call the Sunday before Good Friday "Palm Sunday," because of what happened on that day.

As on other occasions, the people were eager to know whether the prophet of Nazareth would be at the Feast, and the Galilæans were specially eager. Was not Jesus their own countryman?

Early that morning there was a sound of shouting and singing. A procession was on the road. There was a rush from the city, not only of friends, but also of enemies. Jesus was on His way, riding on a colt, upon which some had flung their garments.

The excitement was intense, and a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and placed them in the way. And the multitude that went before, and that followed, cried, "Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

And when some of the Pharisees in the crowd drew near to Jesus, they said to Him, "Master, rebuke Thy disciples."

But Jesus answered, "I tell you, that if these hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."





## PALM SUNDAY

And then, quite unexpectedly, something very surprising happened. As the full glory of Jerusalem burst upon Jesus, as the city shone in the morning light, He broke down in a terrible passion of weeping. He could understand, as no other, that if men do wrong, sadness and pain must follow. In our journey Through the Bible we have noticed this, over and over again, and so it was to be now.

Jesus, who loved His own nation as none other had loved it, knew that in rejecting Him, they were rejecting the Father, and so surely they would bring about their own doom.

"If thou, Jerusalem," He cried, "hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and surround thee, and keep thee in on every side And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave one stone upon another; because thou didst not recognise the time of thy visitation."

A few understood perhaps, but most were greatly puzzled. Why should the prophet from Galilee, in this hour of His triumph, weep? We shall notice that Jesus did not weep for Himself, though He well knew what was before Him; but for those who were about to bring down upon themselves so terrible a doom. In refusing Jesus, the Light of the World, they blinded themselves, and history tells us of the awful destruction of Jerusalem which followed.

## CHAPTER 4

### A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS

JESUS had dismounted, and He now entered the Temple with naked feet.

In the Gospel of John, we read that Jesus turned out the traders from the Temple when first He opened His ministry: but here they are again in the Court of the Gentiles.

## A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS

Now, Jesus had come down into the world from His Father, as much for the Gentiles as for the Jews, and why should the Gentile Court be filled with traders and money-changers, and polluted with cattle and sheep?

So Jesus began to cast out those who sold and those who bought, saying unto them, "It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer for all nations,' but ye have made it a den of thieves."

The priests, the Pharisees, and the scribes dared not prevent Jesus, for they knew that trading and money-changing were illegal; yet they knew, as Jesus knew, that this act was bringing the death of this Galilæan Prophet nearer.

Meanwhile, the blind and the lame came to Jesus, and He healed them all, and the little children who had crowded in began to shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

But the more wonderful Jesus showed Himself to be, the more the chief priests and the scribes were displeased.

"Hearest thou what these children say?" they asked indignantly.

"Have ye never read," said Jesus: "'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise!'"

Jesus spent the evening of Palm Sunday at Bethany, and very likely He spent the night alone with His Father under the stars. On Monday, or the second day of the week, He returned to the Temple. There were two more full days in which Jesus wished to give His nation a last chance to accept Him as their King and Saviour.

We have no record of what happened on the Wednesday, and it is supposed that Jesus spent a quiet day in retirement at Bethany.

On the Thursday evening the end came.

## CHAPTER 5

### ON THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS

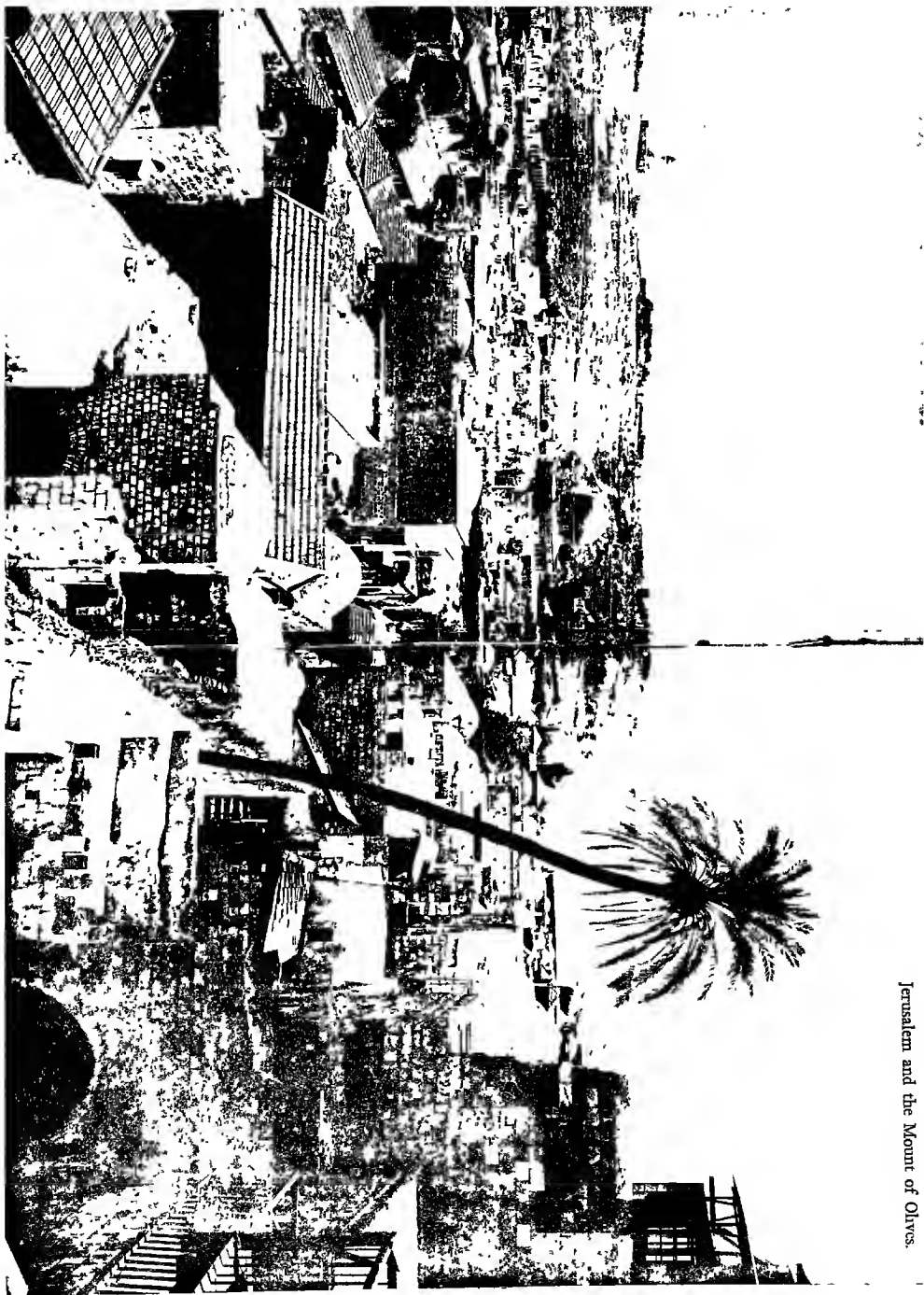
It was clear that the Jewish leaders were quite determined to kill Jesus; but at the moment they dared not make a move, for fear of rousing the people against them. Their best chance was to



“Vast quantities of fish were  
supplied from the lake”—  
fishermen of the Sea of  
Galilee.



Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.







t school in Palestine.

## ON THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS

listen to Jesus as He taught, and to try to trick Him into saying something which might seem to put Him in the wrong.

Here is one of their first questions, "By what authority doest Thou these things? And who gave Thee this authority?"

"I also will ask you," replied Jesus wisely, "and if ye tell Me, then I will answer you: Was the baptism of John from Heaven, or of men?"

This was an exceedingly awkward question, and the leaders argued amongst themselves as to how to answer it:

"If we say 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why did ye not believe him?' If we say 'Of men,' we fear the people; for they be persuaded that John was a prophet, and they will stone us."

"We cannot tell," they answered.

"Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things," said Jesus calmly.

To any one who really wished to learn from Him, Jesus always gave a serious answer, but He knew well that these men were only bent upon tricking Him.

So He spoke a parable, and those of us who have been Through the Bible so far will easily understand that the "householder" is God the Father, the "husbandmen" are the Jews, and the "vineyard" is the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the present state of general excitement, Jesus showed His fine courage in speaking out such a story:

"There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

"And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of the vineyard.

"And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

"And last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, 'They will reverence my son.'

"But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and his inheritance will become ours.'

## ON THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS

"And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?"

Here was another awkward question, and they seemed forced to answer; "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their season."

These Jews had condemned themselves out of their own mouths before all the people, and they were furious to know that the parable had been spoken against them. They would like to have arrested Jesus there and then, but, as yet, they were too much afraid of the people, for many of the most turbulent Galilæans had come up to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast.

Another plan must be thought out, and the Pharisees now joined with the Herodians, in order to make more headway. The Herodians were the party which stood by Herod, the Tetrarch, who ruled by appointment of the Roman Cæsar. Perhaps it would be possible to entangle Jesus into saying something against Cæsar. If only they could do that, the Romans would arrest Him at once. On the other hand, if Jesus could be made to support Cæsar, the people would be roused against Him.

So they pretended to be very loyal and polite to Jesus, and said, "Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, without fear of man. Tell us therefore, what thinkest Thou is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?"

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money!"

So they brought unto Him a coin.

"Whose is the image and superscription?" He asked.

"Cæsar's," they admitted.

"Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

By the fact that they used Cæsar's money, they admitted themselves to be under Cæsar's rule. But did they admit themselves to be under God's rule?

They had tricked themselves indeed; and when they heard His words, they marvelled, and left Him and went their way.

## ON THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS

Jesus was asked other questions, but He was equal to answering them all.

During these last precious days, Jesus spoke some very stern parables, so that, if it were possible, the Jews might still repent. He also foretold strange things that would happen in the future. But as He watched the hard faces of some of these leading Jews, He understood their hearts, and knew that they must bring down woe on their nation.

Once again he broke out in the passionate words He had spoken before:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate, for I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say: 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!'"

. . . . .

Now, while Jesus was teaching in the Temple, He was seated close to the "treasury," or chest into which people threw in their money to pay for the Temple service, or for the poor.

The rich threw in their riches with great pride, so that every one could see how generous they were. But Jesus noticed a poor widow who threw in two mites, which were very tiny coins.

Jesus spoke aside to His disciples and said, "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury; for they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all she had, even all her living."

. . . . .

Here is an incident which must also have given pleasure to Jesus during this critical time. Some Greeks had arrived in Jerusalem for the feast. They were probably Greeks who had become Jewish in their religion, and they came to the disciple, Philip, and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

Philip spoke to Andrew, and then Andrew and Philip went to Jesus and told Him that these Greeks were anxious to see Him.

And Jesus, knowing what was so soon to happen, said, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified."

## ON THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS

He explained that as a grain of corn is nothing unless it sinks into the ground and dies, so that it may shoot forth and bear fruit, so He also must die, and those who chose to serve and follow Him must be willing to die also.

A little later, Jesus spoke out the thought that came into His own heart.

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this cause, came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name!"

Then the people standing by heard some voice or sound:

"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

Some of the people thought that it thundered, and others thought that an angel had spoken unto Him.

## CHAPTER 6

### JUDAS HELPS THE CHIEF PRIESTS

WE all hate a traitor, and it is hard to be quite fair to Judas, or to understand why he did what he did. He was one of the Twelve, chosen from the beginning. He had seen the miracles, listened to the talks, and he was the treasurer of the group. The other disciples hinted that he was a thief, and robbed the little fund. That we do not know. But he had very likely joined Jesus in the hope that one day He would reign as King of the Jews, and overthrow not only Rome, but Herod the present Tetrarch, but even of this we are not sure.

Judas was evidently a disappointed man, and when he learned that the chief priests and scribes were plotting together to kill Jesus, but were afraid to take Him in front of the people, in case they should turn upon them, Judas thought out a plan. If he could deliver Jesus to His enemies privately, at night, then He could be safely arrested without any tumult.

The days were passing, and on Thursday the Passover lamb would be killed. The chief priests and scribes knew that it would be well to silence Jesus before the great Festival.

## JUDAS HELPS THE CHIEF PRIESTS

How could they do it?

Even as they were consulting together, they were told that a man named Judas, one of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, wished to speak with them.

What could this mean?

Judas was brought before them, and as soon as they heard his story, they were glad, and instantly agreed to give him money if he would betray Jesus to them.

Judas knew that Jesus often went out at night to be alone with His Father, and he could easily promise the chief priests and the captains that he would find some chance to bring them to Him, when no crowd was there to rescue Him.

So the chief priests made a bargain with Judas, that they would give him thirty pieces of silver if he helped them to arrest Jesus. Then Judas hurried away, to join the Twelve again, for no one must guess that he had been to the chief priests.

But Jesus knew!

## CHAPTER 7

### THE LAST EVENING TOGETHER

ON Thursday, Jesus sent Peter and John to Jerusalem, so that they might prepare for the Passover meal that evening.

"Where wilt Thou that we prepare," they asked.

"Behold," said Jesus, "when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house: 'The Master saith unto thee, "Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?"' And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready."

So Peter and John went and found all as Jesus had told them. So they arranged for the Passover. And when the hour came, the supper was spread on the low tables, with couches on three sides of it, on which Jesus and His disciples could recline.

## THE LAST EVENING TOGETHER

They were all there, including Judas, and it is hard for those of us who know the end of the story, to imagine the thoughts in the minds of the disciples. They probably still hung on to the hope that their Master had been mistaken in what He had said about being taken by the Jews, and there had been some quarrelling amongst them as to which of them should be the greatest.

Jesus knew that He was leaving them very soon, and He wished to help them to the end. So He rose from the table, and laid aside His outer garment and took a towel; and after He had poured water into a basin He began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel.

They were amazed, for the washing of the feet was the task given to a slave, or to the youngest present. No one remonstrated at first; but when Jesus came to Peter, he exclaimed, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?"

"What I do," said Jesus, "thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

"Thou shalt never wash my feet!" answered Peter.

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," said Jesus.

At that, Peter wanted to have his hands and his head washed also, which was so like the eager and impulsive disciple.

But Jesus explained that he who has been bathed is clean except for the dust he has gathered on his feet.

"Ye are clean, but not all," he added, for Jesus knew the one who was about to betray Him.

But after Jesus has put away the towel, and replaced His robe, and returned to His place, He made some explanation of His act:

"Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither He that is sent, greater than He that sent Him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

What was Judas thinking? The Master he was about to betray

## THE LAST EVENING TOGETHER

had washed and dried his feet. Surely this loving act ought to have made him feel unutterably sorry for what he had already done, and for the disloyalty in his heart.

As for Jesus, He became greatly distressed, and He said sadly, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me."

The disciples looked round upon one another, doubting even themselves.

"Is it I? Is it I?" they asked.

Now, John was reclining the nearest to Jesus, for he was known to be the favourite disciple whom Jesus loved with a very special love. So Peter beckoned to him, and hinted that he should find out from Jesus which of them was the betrayer.

Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a morsel, when I have dipped it in the dish."

"The Son of Man," he continued, perhaps wishing to give the silent Judas one last chance, "goeth as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born!"

And as they went on with the supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed and brake it, and gave it to them and said, "Take eat; this is My body."

And He took the cup; and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many."

And at last there came the moment of moments, when Jesus dipped the morsel in the dish, and handed it to Judas.

"That thou doest, do quickly "

Even yet, the disciples could not believe that Judas was actually going to betray his Master, and some of them thought that as Judas was the treasurer and kept the money, Jesus had said, "Buy those things we have need of against the feast," or that he was to give something to the poor.

But when Judas had received the morsel, he rose hurriedly, and went out at once. And it was night.

And now Jesus was alone with the eleven, and He said quietly, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me; and as I said unto the Jews, 'Whither I go ye cannot come;' so now I say it to you.



## THE LAST EVENING TOGETHER

"A new commandment I give unto you 'That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Peter said, "Lord, whither goest Thou?"

"Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards."

"Why cannot I follow Thee now?" persisted Peter. "I will lay down my life for Thy sake."

Jesus answered with deep affection, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily I say unto thee the cock shall not crow, before thou hast denied thrice that thou knowest Me."

## CHAPTER 8

### THE BEAUTIFUL FAREWELL

JESUS was now alone for the last time on earth with His disciples, whom He loved so dearly, and who had been with Him through His ministry. They had often distressed Him, and even disappointed Him, and in an hour or so they would all desert Him in a terrified panic.

But Jesus loved them all, and He knew that in the difficult days to come, when He had left them, they would go on working for the coming of the Kingdom of God, and most of them would, in one way or another, lay down their lives for His sake.

Much that Jesus said just now was very puzzling; but when they remembered it afterwards, it became clear:

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

"And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

But Thomas interrupted and asked, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

## THE BEAUTIFUL FAREWELL

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life!" answered Jesus.

Philip said unto Him, "Lord show us the Father, and we shall understand and be satisfied."

Jesus answered, "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip. He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, 'Show us the Father.' "

Then Jesus went on to explain that when He was gone, He would send them the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to teach them, and to remind them of so much that He had taught them. He must have puzzled them utterly when He told them that after He was risen from the dead, He would go before them into Galilee.

What could their Master mean by that?

But even as Jesus was talking, the time was passing, and Judas was acting out his deed of darkness. He had met the priests, and they were already arranging for the arrest. Jesus knew well what was before Him, and He closed His talk with a wonderful prayer, not only for the disciples, but also for each one of us.

"Neither pray I for these alone," He said, "but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Such words are too deep for us to understand exactly, but the more we think about them, the clearer they will become.

They sang a hymn together, which was one of the psalms, and then the little group walked out under the moonlight, across the brook Kidron of which we have heard before, and entered into a garden.

They all knew this Garden of Gethsemane, for they had often met together here, as Judas knew. In fact, Judas had been quite sure that it was here that Jesus would come, after the supper was ended.

It is wonderful to know that whenever we look at the Moon, we see with our eyes something which Jesus saw with His eyes—

## THE BEAUTIFUL FAREWELL

unless we travel to Palestine, we can see nothing that Jesus saw, except the Moon, the Sun, and some of the stars.

It was under the light of what we call the Easter Moon, that Jesus endured a time of great agony.

He had watched the Moon rising and growing for a month, and knew that when it was full He would have returned to His Father.

We must never imagine that Jesus feared the coming of pain. He was strong, and in the prime of life, and could endure the tortures which others had to bear. But what hurt Him was the knowledge that though He had poured out the love of His Father upon man, men were going to scorn it and refuse it. And no one can scorn the love of the Father without bringing down upon himself sorrow.

As the prophet had warned the Jews, so Jesus had warned them, and they would not hear. Jesus felt the sin of the world, as though it were His own. So no wonder that He went apart from Peter, James, and John, whom He had specially chosen to be near Him.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE ARREST

PETER, James, and John were worn out with trouble and anxiety, and their Master's manner puzzled them.

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death," He said; "tarry ye here and watch."

And He went forward, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

And the Father sent an angel to strengthen Jesus.

But, being in an agony, Jesus prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. And when He rose from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow.

## THE ARREST

"What, Peter!" He said gently; "could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Jesus went away a second time and prayed, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done!"

But when He returned to His disciples, He found them asleep; so He left them, and returned to His prayer, to repeat the same words.

But at last He returned a third time, and found His sleeping disciples.

"Sleep on now, and take your rest," He said, meaning that it was now too late for them to help Him by watching with Him. "Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me."

And now the disciples heard sounds, and saw lights, and a dreadful fear came upon them. The hour had indeed come; for a great multitude arrived, with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people, and lo, Judas was at their head, guiding them!

Judas had already given them a sign, saying, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast."

And forthwith Judas came to Jesus, and said, "Hail, Master!" and kissed Him.

And Jesus answered him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

"Lord, shall we smite them with the sword?" exclaimed some of the disciples.

Peter, indeed, instantly drew his sword, and struck one of the high priest's servants, and smote off his ear.

But Jesus said quickly, "Peter, put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou, that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall even now give Me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Then Jesus said to those who had arrested Him, and were binding Him, "Allow Me thus far!"

## THE ARREST

So He was able to stretch out His hand and heal the servant of the wound which Peter had given.

But Jesus added a word of remonstrance to those who were binding Him.

"Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves, to take Me? I was daily with you in the Temple, teaching, and ye took Me not. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

So they bound Jesus and led Him away.

Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.

## CHAPTER 10

### FROM NIGHT TO MORNING

It was still the dead of night, or very early morning, when Jesus was arrested and taken before Annas, still called High Priest; but Annas soon sent on the prisoner to Caiaphas, his son-in-law, who was the acting High Priest.

The scribes and elders were assembled in the High Priest's palace, waiting anxiously, and they were overjoyed when at last the helpless prisoner was brought in.

Yet was Jesus helpless? They could do nothing to Him unless Jesus Himself allowed it, for He had said, "I lay down My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Now Peter, having partly recovered from his terror, hurried after Jesus, in company with another disciple, who is believed to have been John. This disciple was known to the High Priest, and went in to the palace; but Peter stood at the door, until the other disciple had spoken to the young woman who kept the door and brought Peter in.

"Art not thou one of this Man's disciples?" she asked Peter.

"I am not," said Peter.

It was cold that night, and a fire had been made, and the

## FROM NIGHT TO MORNING

servants and officers warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them and warmed himself.

But a little distance away, Jesus was standing bound before Caiaphas.

Now, we must realise that all that was now happening was quite illegal. Jesus never had a fair trial. It was necessary to find witnesses to accuse Him of doing wrong things, worthy of death; but they could not find any, and the false witnesses they found did not even agree with one another. But at last they thought they had found their chance.

At last there came two false witnesses, who said rudely, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days.'"

Perhaps Peter heard, and remembered that Jesus had said; something like this; though Jesus had meant the temple of His body which would be destroyed and raised again in three days. But Peter still stood near the fire warming himself.

As for Jesus, He made no kind of answer, and the High Priest rose up angrily and said, "Answerest Thou nothing?"

Jesus still remained silent.

"I adjure Thee, by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

"I am," said Jesus; "and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Then the High Priest rent his clothes, and said, "What need we any further witness? Ye have heard the blasphemy; what think ye?"

And these scribes and elders, having already made up their minds against Jesus, instantly condemned Him to death. They had got their way at last.

In their fury, some of them even spat on Jesus, to show how they despised Him; and they blindfolded Him, and struck Him, and asked Him to prophesy who had struck Him. Even the servants struck at Him. But Jesus made no kind of resistance.

And what of Peter?

When a maid noticed Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and said, "Thou wast with Jesus of Nazareth."

But Peter denied, saying, "I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest."

## FROM NIGHT TO MORNING

And a maid saw him again and began to say to them that stood by, "This is one of them."

But a little later some of those in the palace said, "Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilæan, and thy speech agreeth thereto."

Then Peter, still more frightened, began to curse and to swear, saying, "I know not this Man of whom ye speak."

And the cock crew.

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice."

And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

## CHAPTER I I

### CHRIST BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD

THE Jewish nation, being under the Romans, had not the power to have Jesus crucified, and therefore it was necessary for the chief priests and elders to bring Him before Pilate, the Roman Governor.

Now, it was always an anxious time for the Roman Governor when a Jewish Feast was held, and it was his endeavour to do what he could to keep the Jews quiet. A Governor who allowed disturbances to get the upper hand in his Province might be sure of getting into trouble with the Roman Cæsar.

Pontius Pilate must have heard that there was great excitement in Jerusalem over some supposed evil-doer, and early on the Friday, or sixth day, morning he was called upon by the chief priests and elders to receive a prisoner who was alleged to be guilty of death.

Here we must break off, and consider Judas:

"Then Judas, which had betrayed Jesus, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders saying, 'I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.'"

A great many opinions have been given as to why Judas

## CHRIST BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD

betrayed Jesus. It seems hardly possible that he did it just for the money. Perhaps he was disappointed that Jesus refused to make Himself a king with an army at His back. Perhaps, again, he still believed that Jesus had such power, that He would work a miracle for Himself and so be saved. No one knows the exact truth; but we do know that Judas was in agony at what he had done, and hoped that by confession to the chief priests and elders, he might help Jesus before it was too late.

Jesus was "innocent," he cried passionately.

"What is that to us?" they mocked. "See thou to that!"

Then Judas threw down the thirty pieces of silver on the Temple pavement, and rushed away and hanged himself.

The priests collected up the money, and wondered what to do with it. They had no thought of rushing off themselves to tell Pilate that the prisoner was innocent. It would not do to put the money in the treasury, because it was the price of blood. Afterwards, they bought a field in which to bury strangers, and this field was for long called, "The field of blood."

And, meanwhile, Pontius Pilate found the strange, silent Prisoner standing before him, and heard the clamours of His accusers, to which it was his duty, as governor, to listen. The accusations were puzzling. This Prisoner was no murderer, no thief, no rebel. Yet He was accused of corrupting the nation, and forbidding the Jews to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself was the Christ of God.

It was certainly true that Jesus had called Himself the Christ of God. But He had, as we know, warned the Jews that they were to give the tribute money to Cæsar. Pilate, however, did not know that. If this Man were in fact posing as a king, was not that dangerous to Rome?

"Art thou the King of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"Thou sayest it," said Jesus, which meant, "That is the truth; I am."

But even though Jesus had admitted so much, Pilate exclaimed, "I find no fault in this Man!"

Then they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place."



## CHRIST BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD

"Is the man a Galilæan?" asked Pilate quickly. This might get him out of a difficulty. Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee was in Jerusalem at that very hour. Why should he not send this Man to Herod? Let Herod decide. A Galilæan was under Herod's jurisdiction.

But Pilate was still puzzled as to what to do, and he called Jesus aside, that he might speak to Him privately. There was something strange and out of the common about this brave young Galilæan. Pilate had never met any prisoner like Him.

"Art thou the King of the Jews?" he asked once more.

"Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" asked Jesus.

"Am I a Jew?" answered Pilate. "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me; what hast Thou done?"

"My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not of this world."

Yet again Pilate persisted:

"Art Thou a king, then?"

"As thou sayest, I am a king," answered the Prisoner. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice "

"What is truth?" asked Pilate.

Then not waiting for an answer, he went out to the Jews and said, "I find in Him no fault at all."

But this would never do, and Pilate saw that faces were clouding with anger.

Now, there was a custom that at the Passover Feast, the Roman Governor should release some popular prisoner to the Jews, and give them the choice as to who it should be. The Jews had already made up their minds that they wanted the release of a man named Barabbas, who had raised rebellion, and been thrown into prison for murder. But there was still a loophole for Pilate, and he decided to send Jesus off to Herod.

When Herod saw Jesus being brought in to him, he was exceedingly glad, for he had wanted for a long time to see Jesus.





## CHRIST BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD

He had heard many things about Him, and hoped that Jesus would do a miracle before him.

Here was a chance for Jesus to save Himself.

But though Herod asked Jesus many questions, Jesus answered him nothing. Yet the chief priests and scribes stood round, vehemently accusing the silent Prisoner. Jesus must have disappointed Herod; and now, in scorn, he and his men of war mocked Jesus, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That day, though Pilate and Herod had been enemies, they became friends.

Pilate called the chief priests and rulers, and said to them frankly, "Behold, I have examined this Man before you, and I find no fault in Him touching those things whereof ye accuse Him. No nor yet Herod, to whom I sent you. There is nothing worthy of death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him."

Then they all cried out at once, "Away with this Man and release unto us Barabbas!"

Then Pilate took Jesus, and had Him scourged. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe (purple being the royal colour).

And the soldiers mocked and kneeled and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and they struck at Him cruelly.

Pilate was still unsatisfied, and felt that he had now made Jesus suffer enough; and, wishing still to rescue Him, he brought Him, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns out to the Jews.

"Behold, the Man!" cried Pilate.

"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" they shouted back.

"Take ye Him and crucify Him!" said Pilate, trying to get rid of the awkward responsibility; "for I find no fault in Him."

For a Roman officer of justice, that ought to have been enough; Pilate's duty was to discharge an innocent prisoner.

But the Jews answered, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid; for amongst the Romans there were many legends and myths of the heathen gods coming down to earth in the form of men. What if, by some tragic mistake, he killed a son of a god! For he knew

## CHRIST BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD

that it was for envy that the Jews had brought this prisoner before him.

To make his perplexity worse, he received a message from his wife saying, "Have thou nothing to do with this just Man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him."

Again Pilate was alone with Jesus. The Roman officer faced the King wearing the crown of thorns.

"Whence art Thou?" asked Pilate anxiously.

But Jesus gave him no answer.

"Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee and have power to release Thee?"

And Jesus the King answered royally, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above." Then Jesus added, as though making a kindly excuse for Pilate, "Therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin."

Then again Pilate did his utmost to get these eager, fiery Jews to give way. But the Jews thought of an argument which would force Pilate to do their will:

"If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."

That was a fatal thought. The Jews had it in their power to send an accusation against Pilate to Rome, and his career would be wrecked.

Pilate again cried out, "Behold your King!"

"Away with Him! Away with Him!" they cried. "Crucify Him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" asked Pilate.

The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Cæsar!"

The excitement was growing, and Pilate saw that he could make no headway against the Jews, and that a tumult was arising; so he took water and washed his hands, before all the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person; see ye to it!"

Then all the people answered, "His blood be on us, and on our children!"

So Barabbas was released, and Jesus was led forth to be crucified.

It was the custom for the prisoner to carry his own cross to

## CHRIST BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD

the place of execution; but Jesus was now so worn out that the soldiers laid hold of a man named Simon, who had come into Jerusalem from the country, and they compelled him to bear the cross and to follow after Jesus.

Great multitudes followed the sad procession, and women bewailed and wept for pity.

But Jesus, turning unto them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

And with Jesus were two evil-doers, who were to be crucified with Him. And when they came to the place of execution, which was called Calvary, there they crucified Jesus with the two thieves, the one on the right hand and the other on the left.

And Jesus prayed to His Father and said:

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

## CHAPTER 12

"HE SAVED OTHERS; HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE!"

ON the centre cross there was written the accusation of the victim:

"This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

It was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and the chief priests were not pleased about it.

They went off to Pilate and said, "Write not 'The King of the Jews,' but that 'He said "I am the King of the Jews."'"

But Pilate answered them bluntly, "What I have written, I have written."

The soldiers had the right to share their prisoners' clothes; so the four guards took the garments of Jesus and shared them. But one of His garments was woven in one piece, so they said, "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be."

At first there was great mockery amongst the crowd.

"Ah, Thou that destroyest the Temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself and come down from the cross!" they shouted.

Even the chief priests and scribes came to gloat over their success.

**"HE SAVED OTHERS; HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE!"**

"He saved others; Himself He cannot save!" they said to one another. "Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe!"

"He trusted in God!" said others. "Let God deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

Even the thieves railed at Jesus at first. One of the poor fellows cried, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us!"

But the other thief, who had been watching the patience of Jesus, rebuked his fellow and said, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? We, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss."

Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

This tortured criminal believed that Jesus was a king.

And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

Now, by the cross there stood Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. The disciple John was there, but we are not told whether any of the other disciples had returned.

When Jesus saw His mother and John standing near, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold thy Son!"

Then He said to John, "Behold thy mother."

John understood by that, that he was to take care of Mary as a son, and from that hour, he took her into his own home.

But now a great fear began to fall on Jerusalem. It was only the sixth hour, or midday, and a strange darkness fell. The darkness lasted for three hours, and about the ninth hour the watchers heard a loud voice calling from the cross.

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which meant "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Some who heard the cry thought that Jesus was calling upon Elias, and one ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink.

But the rest said, "Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save Him."

**" HE SAVED OTHERS; HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE! "**

But the end had come. The door of Paradise was opening. The Father was waiting for His beloved Son.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" so the watchers heard. Then again, "It is finished!"

Jesus gave a loud cry, and yielded up His spirit.

And the Roman centurion who was in command exclaimed, "Certainly this was a righteous man! Truly this Man was the Son of God!"

And the priests in the outer Holy Place of the Temple looked on in amazement at a strange thing that happened. The veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was rent from the top to the bottom. And at the cross, one of the soldiers, to make quite sure that Jesus was dead, pierced his side, and there came out blood and water.

There was a rich man, Joseph, of Arimathæa, who was good; he was a disciple of Jesus, though secretly, for fear of the Jews. But now that they had done their worst, he went boldly to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised that Jesus had died so soon, and he commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean, linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

But even yet the chief priests and the Pharisees were not satisfied, and they came to Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, 'He is risen from the dead'; so the last error shall be worse than the first."

Pilate answered shortly enough, "Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as ye can!"

So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

So they thought that they had conquered the Galilæan, the Man from Nazareth, the Christ who had proclaimed Himself a King and the Son of His Father.





## Part Five

### CHAPTER I

#### THE RISEN CHRIST

**T**HE disciples, the women, and all the friends of Jesus must have been thinking sad and despairing thoughts on that Friday evening. The awful excitement was over, the very worst had happened, and the body of their Lord and Master had been laid in the grave by Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, who had been believing in Jesus for some time, though secretly.

Mary the mother had gone home with John, and the disciples still kept in touch with one another. What else could they do? It was just as though their whole lives had been broken and destroyed.

Some of the women wanted to add more sweet spices and ointments for the precious body; so they prepared them, and then waited anxiously through the long Sabbath Day until it was lawful for them to do the work they longed to do. On the First Day of the week, at the very first sign of dawn, they were at the sepulchre, wondering who would roll away the stone for them, so that they might enter and place their spices on the body of Jesus.

Perhaps the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb would stop them. It was still dark, but they could see to their astonishment that the stone had been rolled back.

## THE RISEN CHRIST

Indeed, there had been an earthquake, and an Angel had descended and rolled back the stone.

Jesus Himself had broken the bonds of death. He had risen and taken His life again, as He had said He would. The grave was empty, except for the grave-clothes.

And when the women saw an Angel in shining garments they were greatly afraid, and bowed their faces to the earth.

"Why seek ye Him that liveth amongst the dead?" said a voice. "Fear ye not, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and behold He goeth before you into Galilee."

As some of the women hurried away, Jesus Himself met them and said, "All hail!"

And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.

There are several accounts of what happened, for the women were not all in the same group, and here is a special story told of how Mary Magdalene went off and found Peter and John, and said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him."

Mary could not believe that Jesus had actually risen; she was completely bewildered.

So Peter and John raced off to the sepulchre, and John outran Peter and arrived first.

Stooping down, he looked into the sepulchre, and saw the linen grave-clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie and the napkin that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

Then John went in, and when he saw he believed. Peter, who had denied Jesus, and John, whom Jesus had loved so specially, went away together. We should like to know what they said to one another. Could it really be true that their crucified Master had actually risen from the dead?

We can imagine that John hurried off to tell this great news to

## THE RISEN CHRIST

the sorrowing Mary, the Mother, who at last understood what old Simeon had said to her when she brought her Baby to the Temple:

"Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also."

But no joy as yet filled Mary Magdalene's heart. She was miserable and heart-broken, as she stood outside the sepulchre weeping. And as she now stooped down and looked into the sepulchre she saw two Angels, one sitting at the head, and the other at the feet of where the body of Jesus had lain.

And they said to her kindly, "Woman, why weepest thou?"

She said unto them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Then Mary withdrew a little, and, turning, she noticed Jesus standing, and she knew not that it was Jesus.

And Jesus said, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?"

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Jesus said unto her, "Mary!"

She turned herself, and said unto Him, "Rabboni!" which is to say, "Master!"

Jesus said unto her, "Hold Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father, but go to My brethren, and say unto them: 'I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to my God, and your God.'"

Then Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.

There is one Resurrection Story which is too sacred for any details to be given. We are only told that Jesus "appeared to Peter." What He said, and what Peter said, we cannot know.

## CHAPTER 2

### AN EVENING WALK

THERE was a disciple named Cleopas, who was the husband of one of the Maries who had stood by the cross, during those tragic





## AN EVENING WALK

hours. He and a companion took a walk out from Jerusalem over the hilly country to Emmaus. Their voices were low and sad, as they spoke of all that had happened, and of how their hopes had been broken. Yet they were puzzled also, for they had heard great news, which they could hardly believe was true.

Then it was that a stranger joined them on the road, as though He wished for their companionship.

"What manner of communications are these that ye have, one with another, as ye walk and are sad?" He asked.

Cleopas answered with a surprised question:

"Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"

"What things?" He asked.

"Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women, also of our company, made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre. And when they found not His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of Angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said; but Him they saw not."

Then their stranger-companion said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?"

Then He taught them out of the Scriptures, from Moses to the Prophets, explaining about the Messiah—the Christ—Himself.

For, as we shall have guessed, the Stranger was Jesus.

But Cleopas and his companion did not know that, and, on reaching Emmaus, the Stranger seemed as though He would walk on, for it would not be polite to intrude. But they constrained Him with great eagerness to stay.

When had they ever had such a companion before?

"Abide with us!" they pleaded; "for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent!"

## AN EVENING WALK

So Jesus went in with them; and while they were seated at supper, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And all in a moment their eyes were opened, and they knew that the Stranger was Jesus, their Master. But almost as suddenly He ceased to be seen of them. He was gone, and they were alone.

In utter amazement, they said to one another, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

The news was far too wonderful to be kept. Without hesitation they went right back to Jerusalem, over the hills, under the stars and the Easter moon.

They found a group of the disciples gathered together, and it is possible that Mary the mother was with them. These were in a great state of excitement, and they said to the newcomers:

"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon!"

So Cleopas and his friend told of the wonderful walk, and how Jesus had joined them, and how, as they talked together, they had never guessed who He was. It was only when they saw Him take the bread and break and bless it, that they knew the marvellous truth.

And while they were talking and listening and telling, Jesus Himself stood in their midst, and said unto them; "Peace be unto you!"

And now, in spite of all the day's experiences, they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. This shows us that though Jesus was really Jesus, and they could recognise Him, His appearance was not quite the appearance of an ordinary human body.

Jesus said unto them, "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts. Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have."

Then Jesus showed them His hands and His feet, which had been pierced by the nails. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, "Have ye any meat?"

And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them.

. . . . .

## AN EVENING WALK

Now, as we shall expect, there was great consternation amongst the chief priests and elders when the soldier-guards came and reported their strange experience, and that the body of Jesus was gone.

So a council was held; for if this report spread, things would be worse and worse. They must find some way of stopping the story from spreading. They decided to bribe the soldiers with "large money," on the understanding that they told every one that the disciples came and stole the body away while they slept.

The soldiers knew well enough that to sleep on duty was a crime which meant terrible punishment, but the councillors promised that if the story came to the ears of the governors, they would explain and make it all right. So the soldiers took the money and told the false story that the body had been stolen.

## CHAPTER 3

### THOMAS AND PETER

THOMAS was not with the other disciples when Jesus came; and when they told him that they had seen the Lord, he entirely refused to believe them.

"Except," he said, "I shall see in His hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe!"

Now about eight days after this the disciples were together, and Thomas was with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace be unto you!"

Then He said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing."

And Thomas answered and said, "My Lord and my God!" He had no need to put out his hand. He knew his Lord at once.

"Thomas," said Jesus, "because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."



## THOMAS AND PETER

So Jesus announced His blessing upon all future men, women, and children, who, though they had not seen Jesus with their bodily eyes, were seeing Him in their hearts, and learning to love and serve Him.

Here is one more story of the Resurrection, and the incident took place in Galilee.

Jesus had told His disciples, before He suffered, that He would go before them into Galilee, and some of the Galilæans set out from Jerusalem and returned to the beloved Lake.

Probably Mary the mother remained, with James, the Lord's brother, and others, waiting for them to return. We must realize that there were two important men named James. James, Jesus's brother, and James, John's brother. Amongst those who returned to Galilee were Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John.

How clearly they must all have remembered the days, not so long ago, when Jesus sat in the boat, and the crowds came to hear their Master.

"I am going fishing," said Peter, one evening.

"We also go with thee!" said the rest.

So that night they fished through the long dark hours, and caught nothing.

But in the morning, as they were drawing to shore, they noticed a man standing watching them. But they had no idea that He was Jesus.

"Children, have ye any meat?" He asked.

"No," they answered, for indeed their nets were empty.

"Cast the net on the right side of the ship," said the stranger, "and ye shall find!"

So they cast the net, and took a great haul of fishes.

Then John exclaimed to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

And at that, Peter plunged into the sea to go to Jesus, leaving the others to look after the fish.

And as soon as they were come to land, they noticed a fire of coals, and there were fish laid thereon and bread.

"Bring of the fish that ye have caught!" said the stranger.

So Peter helped to draw up the net, which contained one hundred and fifty-three great fishes. Yet the net was not broken.

"Come and dine," said the stranger.

Yet though they all knew that the stranger was the Lord, none of them dared ask, "Who art Thou."

Then Jesus took the bread and brake it, and distributed it to them, as well as the fish. But after they had dined, Jesus turned and spoke specially to Peter.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me, more than these?"

"Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee!"

"Feed My lambs!" said Jesus.

Then Jesus spoke a second time.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

"Yea, Lord! Thou knowest that I love Thee!" protested Peter.

"Feed My sheep," said Jesus.

He said to him a third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

Peter was grieved because Jesus had said the third time, "Lovest thou Me!" and he answered, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

"Feed My sheep," said Jesus.

Peter had denied Jesus with oaths and curses, only a few weeks before, saying, "I know not the Man!"

But now Peter was sure—sure for the rest of his life—that Jesus was his Lord and Master.

Then Jesus warned Peter that the day would come when he, too, would be crucified, and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto Thee, 'When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.'"

So by that Peter knew that he was to serve his Master through his life until he was old, and that in the end he would die on the cross. But he was no longer afraid.

## JESUS IS RECEIVED UP INTO HEAVEN

### CHAPTER 4

#### JESUS IS RECEIVED UP INTO HEAVEN

FOR forty days Jesus appeared from time to time to His disciples, not only to the Eleven, but to many others who loved Him. On one occasion He was seen of five hundred at once, and He gave many infallible proofs that He had indeed risen from the dead.

Those who had been in Galilee returned to Jerusalem, for it was necessary for all those who believed in Jesus to keep in touch with one another, so as to learn how best to carry on the work. Indeed, Jesus told them that they were to await in Jerusalem the coming of the Holy Spirit, without which they would have no power to work.

Here is one of the messages which Jesus gave them, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age."

But there came a day when Jesus led His disciples out of Jerusalem, as far as Bethany, and together they went up the Mount of Olives.

From here, as we know, they could see Jerusalem, and some of them asked Jesus whether He meant at this time to restore the kingdom to Israel, for they still clung to the idea of some great Kingdom for the Jews.

But Jesus answered, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.

"But ye shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

That was a wider and grander commission than to build up an earthly kingdom for Israel! Then Jesus lifted up His hands and blessed them all; and, as they watched, He was taken from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

## JESUS IS RECEIVED UP INTO HEAVEN

They looked stedfastly up toward the heavens, but Jesus was no longer to be seen. Their Master had gone from their sight, but He had left them the promise of His Holy Spirit, who would live in their hearts and teach them and the wide world the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Even as they waited, two Angels appeared and spoke to them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen Him go up into heaven."

Then their hearts were filled with wonder, and with the spirit of worship, and they returned to Jerusalem.

Surely they had been defeated past hope? Their very Leader had been done to death as a common criminal. So thought the Jews.

Yet the disciples knew that the death on the cross had been a mighty triumph, though they did not altogether understand how. But this Jesus, their own Master, had risen from the dead, and returned to His Father and their Father.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE WONDERFUL NEW BEGINNING

FIFTY days after the Feast of the Passover there came the Feast of Pentecost. It was held as a harvest thanksgiving, for the first Syrian harvests were gathered in the early summer.

We call this Festival Whitsuntide, because, in the early times, those who were newly baptized wore white in church—hence White Sunday Tide or Time.

Now, Jesus had promised the disciples that the time would come when they would receive from Him an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and so it happened that on one of the days of the Feast they were all together, probably feeling that the promise would soon be kept.

We cannot explain what happened exactly, but we know that from that date the disciples were indeed filled with a power that made them brave and strong to go forth and teach about Jesus and His resurrection, as they could never have done of themselves.

## THE WONDERFUL NEW BEGINNING

St. Luke, who is responsible for the book of the Acts of the Apostles, tried to describe what happened as follows:

"Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty, rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

The effect upon them was that they began to speak very strangely, and it is not known precisely what speaking with tongues meant. But, in the excitement, the people of many nations who were in Jerusalem came crowding to learn what had happened.

The disciples spoke, and those present, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judæa, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, both Jews and those who had become Jews, Cretes and Arabians, understood what was said, as though the disciples were speaking in their own language.

It was all so strange and mysterious that the people in the crowd looked at one another in astonishment, and some mocked and doubted, and thought these excited Galilæans were drunk.

But now came Peter's chance. He, the disciple who had denied his Master, now stood forward before that great Jerusalem crowd, and preached his first sermon for Jesus the Christ.

"Ye men of Judæa," he cried, "and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you. For these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days,' saith God, 'I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.'"

Then Peter told them the story of Jesus, and gave them a great challenge.

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words! Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know; Him, being delivered by the settled counsel and foreknowledge of

## THE WONDERFUL NEW BEGINNING

God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."

There was the great accusation, and at the same time the message which was to save.

Peter went on to insist: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, Whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ "

And when the people heard what Peter said, they were pricked in their hearts, and they said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

"For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord shall call."

And so it came about that three thousand men and women accepted what Peter said, and were baptized.

Thus it was that the first "Church" was formed.

The Eleven Apostles, together with Matthias, who had been chosen to take the place of Judas, became the leaders of all the men and women disciples who joined together in a great fellowship, and had all things in common. Some sold their possessions and goods and shared out with the poorest, and they were constantly in the Temple, preaching and praising God, and were full of great happiness.

The people watching these joyful followers of Jesus of Nazareth, were struck with their warm-hearted kindness, and spoke well of them; but the Temple authorities, the Sadducees and others, were watching with much anxiety what was happening.

Surely Jesus of Nazareth had been safely crucified and buried? What did this new excitement mean? It might be necessary to stop these Apostles and the people who were joining them, before further mischief grew.

## AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

### CHAPTER 6

#### AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

It has not been decided which the Beautiful Gate was, but it was one leading up into the Temple, and one day, as Peter and John passed through, at the hour of prayer, they noticed a lame beggar, who was laid at the gate every day by his friends, so that he might ask for gifts from the worshippers. The man saw Peter and John approaching, and he pleaded for some gift.

And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him said, "Look on us!"

The man was instantly on the alert, for he was sure that Peter was about to give him something.

But Peter said kindly, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Then Peter took him by the right hand, and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he, leaping up, stood and walked, and entered into the Temple with Peter and John, leaping and praising God. All the people saw him leaping and walking and praising God, and they were filled with astonishment, for they recognised him as the lame man who sat at the Beautiful Gate begging.

Here was an excitement indeed! The lame man who had been healed, held on to Peter and John, and the people ran together into Solomon's Porch which stretched in a vast colonnade to the east of the Temple? They were anxious to know the truth.

We shall have noticed that Peter did not heal the lame man in his own name, but in the name of Jesus of Nazareth—as we say at the end of our prayers, "For Jesus' sake,"—and Peter now seized his chance of proclaiming Jesus once more.

"Ye men of Israel," he said, "why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our Fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and

## AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

the Just One, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you!" (Many in that crowd knew that they had shouted to Pilate; "Away with him! Not this man, but Barabbas!")

"Yes," went on Peter, "ye killed the Prince of Life, Whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know.

"And now brethren," pleaded Peter, "I know that it was through ignorance that ye did it, as did also your rulers. . . . Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, 'In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.'"

So Peter reminds us all of Abraham, the Friend of God, who in the long, long ago days had obeyed God, and received the promise.

Now as the people listened, there was great anxiety amongst some of the authorities. They were grieved that Peter was teaching the people and preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead. The story that they had set going, that the disciples had stolen His body, must not be allowed to be contradicted. So, as it was drawing towards evening the Governor had Peter and John arrested, and they were put in prison until the next day.

But though Peter and John were in prison, there was no holding back the people. They had seen the healed man, they had heard Peter's words, and about five thousand of them believed in the very Jesus of Nazareth whom Pilate had called "The King of the Jews," and whom some of them at least must have hounded on to His cruel death.

But meanwhile there was very serious talk amongst the leaders. The very men who had condemned Jesus, only a few weeks before, were ready to condemn Peter and John, too. There was Annas, the older high priest, before whom Jesus was taken first, and Caiaphas and others, and rulers, elders, and scribes, and relatives of the high priest who had gathered at Jerusalem. They decided to have these Galilæans brought before them; and when they had set them in their midst they questioned them, saying, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?"

Peter was the spokesman, and the healed man had come boldly forward to stand by the prisoners.



## AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

And Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to his judges, "Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we be examined this day of the good deed done to the lame man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, even by Him, doth this man stand here before you whole.

"This is the stone, which was despised by you builders and counted as nothing, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

This was bold talk for Caiaphas and the others to hear. No other name but the name of Jesus of Nazareth—the man who had been mocked of the high priests and delivered over to Pilate!

They noticed the boldness of Peter and John, and they saw also that they were not highly educated men, and they were astonished, and decided that they must have been companions of Jesus. And as the healed man stood there, they could not deny the miracle, and felt themselves in an awkward position. They commanded the gaolers to remove Peter and John and the healed man, and then they talked together very earnestly.

"What shall we do to these men?" they asked one another. "For that a notable miracle hath been done by them is clear to all that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further amongst the people, let us threaten them at once that they speak henceforth to no man in this name!"

So they had the prisoners brought back, and they commanded them that they were never again to speak nor to teach in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John had a clear answer to such a command.

"Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. But we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard!"

That was certainly a straight answer, and for the moment the Council had to accept it.

They again threatened them, and then were forced to let them go, for they feared what the people might do if they punished them. For the people were praising God for the miracle that had

## AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

been worked on a lame man who was more than forty years old.

Then Peter and John went away to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had done, and the company said with one accord, "Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is. Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hath said, 'Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ for of a truth, against Thy holy child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together.'"

And as they spoke together, the place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE OPPOSITION GROWS

WE must think of these early believers in Jesus as happy, fearless, ready for any troubles that might come to them, and filled with a great love for one another. They would soon be called a "Sect of Jesus of Nazareth," and before very long, they came to be called Christians, but not just yet. They knew that Jesus had warned them that they must be ready to "take up the cross" if they were to follow Him, and to be ready to lose their lives if necessary.

So here they were in Jerusalem, teaching in Solomon's Porch, meeting one another in their houses, having meals together, and refusing to say that anything they possessed was their own, having their goods in common. There was one man, named Barnabas, who sold his property and laid the money at the Apostle's feet. On the other hand there was a man named Ananias, who sold his property, but kept back part of the price, and pretended to Peter that he had brought it all.

And when Peter accused him of lying, not only to man but to God, Ananias dropped down dead. His wife Sapphira, not knowing that her husband was dead and that the lie had been discovered, came in; and when Peter said, "Tell me whether ye sold the land

## THE OPPOSITION GROWS

for so much?" she answered, "Yea, for so much." So she died also, not because she and her husband had only brought part of the money, which they had a full right to do, but because they had lied that they had brought the whole.

And St. Luke tells us that "great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." From now onwards the Apostles were active in the work of preaching and healing and working miracles. Men and women in multitudes joined this "church." People acted as they had done with Jesus, and brought their invalids into the streets, lying on their mats, so that even the shadow of Peter might pass over them in healing power. But more than that, the news spread to other towns round about Jerusalem, and people brought their invalids, those who were troubled with what they called "unclean spirits," and every one of them was healed.

We shall guess at once that such deeds filled the high priests with great indignation, especially the Sadducees, who were rich and powerful and who did not believe that there was any life after death. This must not go on! Solomon's Porch must not be made the meeting place for all these Galilæans and their converts.

So they laid hold of the Apostles, and put them in prison. But that night, as they were about to sleep, an Angel of the Lord came and opened the prison doors, and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand and speak in the Temple to the people, all the words of this life."

So the Apostles arrived early in the Temple, and began their teaching. Now, that morning the high priest called together the Council, and sent to the prison to have the Apostles brought up.

But the officers returned telling a strange story: "The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the guard standing without before the doors; but when we had opened, we found no man therein."

When the high priest and the captain of the Temple and the chief priests heard these things, they feared how much they would grow. It is probable that, having been responsible for the death of Jesus, they began to fear lest the people should rise against them in revenge. They did not understand that the Apostles and these early followers of Jesus had no thought of revenge in their hearts.

## THE OPPOSITION GROWS

But now a messenger told them, "Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the Temple teaching the people."

Then the captain with the officers went and brought the Apostles, but without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

"Did we not strictly command you," said the high priest to the prisoners, "that ye should not teach in this Name? And behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and mean to bring this Man's blood upon us."

Then they answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Spirit whom God hath given to those who obey Him."

No wonder, as the Apostles spoke these words their judges took counsel to slay them!

But let us stop on our journey for a moment, and think out what was happening. The Jews had been for long expecting a mighty Messiah, who would deliver them from the hands of the Romans, and set on high the Jewish nation. Jesus had claimed to be sent from His Father, and had even claimed to be the King of the Jews. He had been crucified, and the rulers hoped that they were rid of Him together with His claim. Yet here were these men claiming not only that Jesus was the Messiah, but that the Messiah the Jews had been expecting had been crucified.

To-day we have come to look upon crucifixion as though it were sacred and almost an honour; but in those days a man who was crucified was, in the eyes of the Jews, "accursed." Was the Jewish race to take as its Messiah one whom the law counted as "accursed"?

Now, among the councillors, there was a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, who had a great reputation for wisdom, being a doctor of the law, and he advised that the Apostles be removed for a little while. And after they were out of hearing, Gamaliel said, "Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves, what ye do as touching these men."

He reminded them of others who had risen up and rebelled

## THE OPPOSITION GROWS

and their rebellions had come to nothing. "Let these men alone," he advised, "for if their work be of men, it will come to nothing, but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, and ye may be found fighting against God."

The Council took Gamaliel's advice; and then they recalled the Apostles, sentenced them to be beaten, and commanded them not to speak again in the name of Jesus. But instead of being distressed, the Apostles left the place, with their backs bleeding, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus. And the beating did not stop them, for every day they taught in the Temple and in their own houses about Jesus, whom God had raised from the dead.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE FIRST MARTYR

GAMALIEL, the strict and severe Pharisee, who had urged Caiaphas to wait before condemning the Apostles, had amongst his scholars or disciples a brilliant young Jew named Saul. Saul was a citizen of the Greek city of Tarsus in Cilicia, a province to the north of the eastern limit of the Mediterranean sea.

Tarsus might be called a university city, and though Saul was brought up as a Jew, according to the strictest rule of the Pharisees, he could read and speak Greek, and was quite familiar with the manners and customs of the Greeks. He certainly knew all about the Greek games, even though, as a Jew, he would be forbidden to join in them; for later we find him using in his writings word-pictures of racing, wrestling, and fighting, and the hard training necessary for excellence in sport.

Saul admired his Rabbi Gamaliel, and had made up his mind to keep to all the rules and regulations of the sect of the Pharisees. Though he was born about the same time as Jesus, we do not read of his ever having actually seen the Master; but from his boyhood he had been taught that any one "hanged on a tree" was accursed, or cast out from God. It infuriated him now to know that there was a new sect arising of men and women who claimed that a





## THE FIRST MARTYR

crucified Galilæan was the great Messiah, of Whom the prophets had spoken.

Now, there was a synagogue in Jerusalem attended by Greek Jews, and Jews from Cilicia, Saul's native district, and it is here, most likely, that Saul first met a young Jew named Stephen. Stephen was also a scholar, and he was a man of great faith and power and did wonders and miracles amongst the people. Stephen argued so skilfully against those who disputed with him about Jesus Christ, that they could not resist his wisdom, nor the spirit in which he spoke.

So they bribed men to report that Stephen had spoken blasphemy against Moses and against God. The result was that Stephen was arrested and brought up before the Council, and false witnesses were brought forward to accuse him. Yet even as they made their accusations, they noticed that the young prisoner's face shone as though it were the face of an angel.

Saul of Tarsus was probably there, watching and listening and longing passionately that the prisoner should be condemned.

And after the witnesses had ceased, the High Priest said to Stephen, "Are these things so?"

And Stephen, careless of what might happen to himself, delivered a great speech, carrying the Council through the history of the Jews, to the days of Solomon and the building of the first Temple.

Now, the witnesses had accused Stephen, as false witnesses had accused Jesus, of threatening to destroy the Temple, which had become the idol of the Nation, and represented their law and religion. Yet knowing how the Council regarded the Temple, Stephen said courageously: "Solomon built God an house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool; what house will ye build Me, or what is the place of My rest?'"

This reminds us of what Jesus said to the woman at the well of Samaria: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

As Stephen spoke, the fury was already rising in the faces of his judges, yet he added sorrowfully, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted, and they have slain them that



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showed them of the coming of the Just One, of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers!"

And when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon Stephen with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus, standing on the right hand of God.

"Behold!" cried Stephen; "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!"

That was enough! They cried out upon Stephen, and stopped their ears, refusing to hear another word, and ran upon him in their frenzy. He was rushed out from the city, and they stoned him. The false witnesses had the right to cast the first stones, and they laid down their outer clothes by Saul of Tarsus, who had hurried out with the crowd to see the end.

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" cried Stephen.

Then he kneeled down and cried with his last remaining strength, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!"

And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Then the followers of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem came and took up the poor broken body, and laid it in a grave, and made great lamentation over him.

## CHAPTER 9

### IN SAMARIA AND AFTERWARDS.

Now, Saul of Tarsus, by taking charge of the clothes of the false witnesses while they stoned Stephen, made himself an accomplice in his murder; and though, as we shall learn afterwards, he had a kind and noble spirit, he was so convinced that Stephen was wrong that he had no regrets. Having seen Stephen die, he set to work to break up the happy fellowship of the followers of Jesus, and went from house to house, spying out both men and women, and getting them thrown into prison.

He got his way in one sense, for the Christians fled from Jerusalem up and down the country; but he failed in another

## IN SAMARIA AND AFTERWARDS

way, for wherever these men and women went they took the good news of Jesus, the Saviour.

We shall remember that the Jews hated the Samaritans, and would have as little to do with them as possible, and one of the greatest insults they once thought they were offering Jesus was when they cried out, "Thou art a Samaritan!"

But Jesus had never hated the Samaritans. He had talked with the woman at the well, He had stayed in her town, He had healed lepers, and showed Himself friendly, and had spoken a great parable, in which the hero of the story was a Samaritan.

So when the Christians were disturbed at Jerusalem, there was one named Philip, who went to Samaria to preach Christ to the people. He was not Philip the Apostle, but another member of the church. He did miracles, and the people listened to him gladly, and he cast out devils, and healed those who were palsied or lame, and there was great joy in the city, and many men and women were baptized.

When Peter and John heard this good news, they also went into Samaria to help in the mission. And later these missionaries spread about into the villages telling the good news; then they returned to Jerusalem. But after a while, an Angel spoke to Philip and told him to go towards the south, along the road which led through the desert lands towards Gaza. Philip did not know why he had to go on this particular way, but he obeyed the Angel and set forth.

Now, there was a Queen of Ethiopia, named Candace, who had an officer, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple, and he was therefore probably a convert to the Jews' religion. He was now returning to Ethiopia, which lay to the south of Egypt; and as he sat in his chariot, he was reading from the roll of Esaias the prophet.

Philip, tramping along, noticed the chariot as it passed him, and the officer reading, and the Spirit of God whispered to Philip: "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."

So Philip ran and caught up the chariot; and as he came quite close, he heard the officer reading aloud, and he recognised that he was reading from the prophet Esaias.

So Philip, by way of introducing himself, said politely, "Understandest thou what thou readest?"

## IN SAMARIA AND AFTERWARDS

The Ethiopian answered, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"

Then he asked Philip to come up into the chariot and sit beside him. Philip glanced over the roll, and read the words, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb, dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth . . . His life was taken from the earth."

"I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this?" asked the Ethiopian. "Of himself or of some other man?"

This gave Philip his chance, and he told the Ethiopian about Jesus, and how He, like a sheep, had gone unresistingly to His death. On and on Philip told of the wonderful life of Jesus, and as the Ethiopian listened he knew that Philip spoke the truth, and that he himself must become a follower of this Messiah Who had been crucified.

As they passed a river, the Ethiopian suggested that there was nothing to hinder him from being baptized, then and there.

"If thou believest with all thy heart," said Philip, "thou mayest."

"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," he answered reverently enough.

So he commanded his chariotcer to stop the horses, and he went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. As soon as the baptism was over, the Spirit of God took away Philip, and the Ethiopian saw him no more. But he went on his way very glad and joyful.

We shall realise that by converting this Ethiopian officer there was now a great chance that the good news of Jesus Christ would spread wherever the Ethiopian went. As for Philip, he was next seen at a place called Azotus, which we shall find on the map near the sea, and he made his way along the coast, past Joppa, until he came to Cæsarea, and in every place he preached about Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 10

### ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

It is quite certain that Saul of Tarsus knew that, having scattered many of the Christians in Jerusalem, they were busy in other





## ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

parts of Judæa, Samaria, and even Galilee, preaching about Jesus. North of Galilee lay the important city of Damascus, and nothing would be more likely than for friends of Jesus of Nazareth to be found in that city.

So Saul went to the High Priest, and poured out his wrath against the disciples of the Lord, and asked him to let him have letters to the leaders of the synagogues in Damascus which would give him authority to arrest any who believed in the Way of Jesus, and, whether men or women, to bring them back with him in chains to Jerusalem.

Jesus used to teach, saying, "I am the Way!" and the early Christians looked upon Christianity as a Way of Life—a belief which could be worked out in practice, for the happiness and good of all.

The High Priest was delighted to find such a keen Pharisee as Saul, one of the ablest men now in Jerusalem. So he gave him all he asked, and Saul set off with his letters and his convoy of officers, feeling quite sure that he was doing an important and very necessary duty. But the Father in heaven knew that Saul had been born for a very different duty, and so it came about that, as he was near Damascus, suddenly a strange light from heaven shined round him. It was so strong and awful that Saul fell to the earth. And as he lay there, he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

"Who art thou, Lord?" he exclaimed.

"I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest!" came the answer.

Saul, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

And the Lord said, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Now, though Saul could hear the words, the men who were with him stood silent in consternation, for they could hear a voice, but could not see any man. And Saul rose from the earth, and he found that he was quite blind. So the servants had to lead him by the hand and guide him safely into Damascus. There he rested, and for three days he neither ate nor drank.

Saul had been quite right that there were disciples of Jesus in Damascus, and one of them, named Ananias, heard the Lord in a vision, calling him.

## ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

"Behold, I am here, Lord!" he answered.

"Arise," said the Lord, "and go into a street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth! He hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand upon him, that he might receive his sight."

But Ananias could not help his objection passing his lips. "Lord," he answered, "I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy name!"

The news had evidently spread far and wide of the havoc which Saul of Tarsus was working among the Christians.

But the Lord answered, "Go thy way, for I have chosen him to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake."

"For My name's sake," we notice once again.

So Ananias was obedient to the vision, and went at once to the house where Saul of Tarsus was, quite fearless of any danger to himself.

We should like to have more description of that scene. Saul, blind, heart-broken, convicted of having persecuted Jesus Himself through His disciples. Saul, thinking of Stephen and his last dying prayer that the sin might not be laid to the charge of his murderers. Saul, feeling himself indeed a murderer, who had been only three days ago ready to murder again

Then some one came into the room, and a quiet voice spoke.

"Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

And at once there fell from Saul's eyes the scales that had blinded him, and he looked into the face of the kind Ananias, whom he had intended to capture and bring bound to Jerusalem.

Through those three days and nights, Saul had prayed and learned much from the very Jesus Whom he had scorned. There was now no doubt in his heart, and he was ready to set aside those terrible letters or warrants, and submit himself to be baptized. Then they gave him food and drink to strengthen him.

## ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

There was a group of disciples at Damascus, and they received Saul in love and fellowship, and he stayed with them for a few days. But from a letter which he wrote some years after this, we learn that he went right off into Arabia, for a time of quiet, that he might think through this great change that had come into his life, and understand what God wished him to do. Again we notice that Saul, like Moses, Elijah, and Jesus Himself, needed rest alone with God to gain strength for his task.

There is a district near Damascus known as Arabia, but Saul may have travelled far south into the land of Sinai.

## CHAPTER II

### SAUL RETURNS FROM THE DESERT

WE do not know how long it was before Saul returned to Damascus, but when he did he was a changed man. The proud young Pharisee, learned in the Jewish Law, had become one of those very Nazarenes he had once hated and despised. He was now, till the end of his life, to use all his powers of intellect for Jesus, and in Damascus he was very soon arguing powerfully amongst the Jews that Jesus was in truth the "very Christ."

As a result we shall not be surprised to hear that the Jews took counsel together to kill him. The Governor of Damascus, under the King Aretas, had the gates of the city watched day and night, and Jews lay in wait to capture him.

Saul knew this, but already the Christians at Damascus had grown fond of him, for we shall find that Saul attracted deep love and loyalty to the very end. He never avoided plain speaking, and even hard speaking, but he had a tender and sensitive heart, and he poured out his love on his fellow believers, or Christians, as they were soon to be called. So it came about that the Damascus disciples decided that he was to be rescued, and they managed to let him down from the window of a house on the city wall in a basket, so that he could escape to the south.

When at last Saul reached Jerusalem, he naturally went to



## SAUL RETURNS FROM THE DESERT

the disciples, and, as naturally, they were afraid of him, and could not really believe that he was a disciple himself. It was only after Barnabas had spoken for him, and told the Apostles how boldly he had been preaching in Damascus in the name of Jesus, and had indeed had to escape for his life, that they accepted him as one of their number.

Saul and Peter must have talked together, and we should like to know what they said. Did Saul plead with Peter for forgiveness, for all the cruel things he had done against the believers in Jesus? Did Peter confess that he had denied his Master, in spite of having been His constant companion for nearly three marvellous years? We know that Saul did not shirk any difficult position, and he disputed with the Greek-speaking Jews, called Hellenists, perhaps in the very synagogue where Stephen used to preach and argue, with the result that they agitated to slay him.

The disciples, therefore, again sent Paul away, this time to his birthplace of Tarsus. For a short time there was rest amongst the little churches which had been brought together in Judæa, Galilee, and Samaria, and they took the chance to help one another by prayer and teaching, and the Holy Spirit was with them, comforting them, and consequently many new disciples joined as in Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 12

### PETER MAKES A TOUR

JAMES, the brother of Jesus, had been appointed president of the church in Jerusalem, but Peter was considered to be the chief of the Apostles. He now took the chance to tour about the country, visiting any groups who believed in Jesus. How well Peter knew these towns and villages, these roads and hillsides! How strange it must have been to him to find himself looked up to as the leader! How he must have missed Jesus!

One day, travelling westward, he arrived at a small place named Lydda, and here he found a man, sick of the palsy, who

## PETER MAKES A TOUR

had kept his bed for eight years. Peter had heard Jesus say, "I make thee whole!" but Peter was only a disciple, and he put it differently:

"Æncas, Jesus Christ makes thee whole. Arise, and take up thy bed!"

So the man rose, took up his mat, and was healed instantly.

Not far from Lydda there lay the thriving seaport of Joppa. Joppa was the port, we shall remember, to which Hiram, King of Tyre, sent the great floats of cedar trees to Solomon. Now, at Joppa there lived a good and warm-hearted disciple named Dorcas, who was known for her many kindnesses to the poor. And great grief came to all her friends when it became known that she was dead.

But some of the disciples knew that Peter was only a few miles away, and they sent for him urgently, asking him to come without delay. When he arrived in Joppa, they brought him into an upper chamber, and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing all the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

But Peter, remembering what Jesus had done when he healed the little maid, put them all from the room, and kneeled and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha," (for that was Dorcas's other name), "arise!"

So Dorcas opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up, and he gave her his hand and lifted her up, and with great joy he presented her unto all her friends alive and well.

This miracle made a great impression on the people, and many believed in Jesus Christ.

As for Peter, he settled down in Joppa for a little while, and lodged with a man named Simon, who was a tanner. As a rule, tanners were scorned by strict Jews, because they had to work on the skins of dead animals, but Peter was learning that Jesus never scorned any man who needed Him. He had so often brought trouble upon Himself because He was friendly with sinners and tax-collectors, with Samaritans and with Gentiles.

## JEWS, GENTILES, HELLENISTS

### CHAPTER 13

#### JEWS, GENTILES, HELLENISTS

HERE we must stop to think out some difficulties which were to face the Apostles and the early Church, or we shall not understand what is to follow.

Jesus was, according to His earthly birth, a Jew; according to His heavenly Sonship, He belonged to all the wide world.

Abraham, we shall remember, had received the promise that through his descendants all the families of the earth would be blessed. But the Jews, as we shall have noticed, had grown more and more exclusive. Any one who was not a Jew, they called "Gentile," or even a "Dog of a Gentile," and naturally the Gentiles returned the insult, speaking of "a Dog of a Jew."

So when Jesus had returned to His Father, the first disciples were principally Jews, and later when the Gentiles believed in Jesus, the disciples wanted them to become Jews also, and submit to all the Jewish rules and regulations. Jesus had never meant this to happen, and for some time there was unhappiness about it, amongst the early believers.

Then, again, the Syrian Jews, as we may call them, and the Hellenist, or Greek-educated Jews, were jealous of one another. Saul was a Hellenist Jew, as was Stephen. It is clear that the good news of Jesus Christ could not spread out to the world unless these disciples were all happy together. But we have to admit that right to the end of his life, some of the Christian Jews were jealous of Saul, because he believed that a Gentile could be a Christian without obeying all the laws and regulations of the Jews.

While Peter was at Joppa, God sent him a vision to teach him that Jews and Gentiles were equal in God's sight, and that he must never call any man common.

We who are Gentiles owe a great debt of gratitude to those who in the very early days after Jesus had returned to His Father stood out so bravely against those who quite honestly believed that a Jew was more beloved of God than a Gentile. We shall under-

## J E W S, G E N T I L E S, H E L L E N I S T S

stand how difficult it was when we know that the Jews in Judæa thought themselves superior to the Jews in Galilee, and the Jews who spoke Aramaic, the Syrian tongue, and who read the Scriptures in Hebrew, thought themselves superior to the Hellenists, who read their Scriptures in Greek.

Saul, the strict Pharisee, who had fulfilled the Law in every detail, had been called by Jesus to become the "Apostle of the Gentiles." That was the wonder of it, and we shall see how nobly he fulfilled his task right to the end.

## C H A P T E R 14

### ANTIOCH

ROME, Alexandria, and Antioch were the three greatest cities in the world, and as Barnabas and Saul stayed in Antioch for a whole year, preaching about Jesus, we shall like to know what the city was like.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, has left a record from which we can get some idea of its grandeur.

It's wide circuit of many miles was surrounded by walls of astonishing height and thickness, which had been carried across ravines and over mountain summits with such daring magnificence of conception as to give the city the aspect of being defended by its own encircling mountains, as though those gigantic bulwarks were but its natural walls. The palace of the kings of Syria was on an island, formed by an artificial channel of the river. From the Golden Gate on the west there ran a road adorned with trees, colonnades, and statues, and Herod the Great had paved it for two and a half miles with blocks of white marble. Broad bridges spanned the river, and there were baths, aqueducts, villas, theatres, and most wonderful gardens.

Overlooking the city there was a gigantic mass of natural rock, and once when a pestilence raged, Antiochus Epiphanes, the ruler who profaned the Temple at Jerusalem, ordered a sculptor to hew the face of the rock into the figure of the grim ferryman who was supposed to row the dead in his boat across the river Styx.

## ANTIOCH

When first Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch, he found that already a number of Greeks had become followers of Jesus Christ; and it was now so very important to carry on the teaching in such a centre that he went over to Tarsus, to seek Saul and invite him to help in the work. So we can think of Saul and Barnabas living in this beautiful city, walking on the white marble pavement, glancing up at the great sculptured figure of the ferryman, and enjoying the flowers and the gardens.

But there was much wickedness in Antioch, which made these followers of Jesus feel quite sure that they must do their utmost to make the people understand about Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Many were interested in the message, and many joined the church, and it was in Antioch that the disciples, both men and women, were first called Christians. They were also called Nazarenes, but gradually the name of Christian took hold, and has remained even until to-day.

## CHAPTER 15

### A GREAT BLOW FALLS

At the beginning of our journey Through the Bible we said that God was to be our Hero, and we have now discovered Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to show us what God is like. As we go on, we shall find that those who followed Jesus Christ, and stood out for Him, were also heroes in their lesser ways.

From now onwards, the Christians had to struggle bravely in a world which did not understand—and often when it did understand, hated the message. Men and women are sometimes very proud, and it hurt their pride to think that the Saviour of the world had been crucified.

Quiet times amongst the Christians were passing away and trouble was rising. Herod Antipas, who had murdered John the Baptist and had insulted Jesus, was now a ruined man. He had offended the Roman Emperor, and had been deposed and banished. His nephew, Herod Agrippa I, who was a grandson of Herod the

## A GREAT BLOW FALLS

Great, was now on the Jewish throne, with the full title of king, and he reigned over Jerusalem and Judæa, and also over Samaria and Galilee.

Herod Agrippa was partly a Jew, and he was anxious to make himself a favourite with the powerful Jewish families. How could he do that better than by starting a persecution against the followers of the crucified Messiah, whom these Sadducees and many of the Pharisees so hated?

The Passover Feast was coming round again, and the date was probably about A.D. 40, when one day, to the terrible distress of the Christians, soldiers arrived and arrested James, John's brother. James was not only one of the Apostles, but he was one of the three special disciples who were so often with Jesus. He had been with Jesus when He was transfigured and met Moses and Elias on the mountain; he had been with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane; he was one of those who wished to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans, when they insulted His Master. James had asked that he might be allowed to sit either on the right hand or on the left hand, when Jesus came into His Kingdom.

Jesus had now received His Kingdom, but it was not the Kingdom that the disciples had been calculating upon. It was a Kingdom in the hearts of the men, women, and children throughout the wide world, who would allow Him to reign over them. And so it came about that James, instead of sitting on an earthly throne, was to be the first Apostle who was to die for Jesus.

We do not know whether James even had a trial. He was hurriedly killed by the sword, so that his execution might be over before the Feast. The leading Jews were overjoyed, for the death of James was a great blow for these Galilaeans, who boldly blamed them before the people of having been guilty of the death of the Jewish Messiah. Herod Agrippa was delighted that he had won such a triumph, and he decided that he would add to it by taking Peter, who was acknowledged to be the most important disciple of all.

The Passover Feast was right upon them, and Jerusalem was crowded. Herod Agrippa had Peter arrested at once, that he might have him safely in prison, ready to be brought out and executed before all the people when the Feast was over. So Peter was kept

## A GREAT BLOW FALLS

in prison, each arm chained to that of a soldier, while two soldiers were on guard; for the king was determined that there should be no rescue.

But Herod Agrippa did not know that the Christians were gathered in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. It is thought that it was in this Mary's house that Jesus ate His last supper with his disciples. How earnestly the Christians prayed for their beloved leader! For indeed how could the young Church continue to grow, if Peter, the most powerful of them all, was killed? Yet, even as they prayed, their faith was weakening. After all, James had been killed, and it might not be their Lord's will that Peter should be saved. As for Peter, he was sleeping peacefully between the two soldiers, and the guard was before the prison door.

Peter had been warned by Jesus that the time would come when he would be crucified, and he may have thought that his hour had come now. But he had no wish to try to escape or to deny his Lord. He was not in the least afraid, knowing that whatever happened Jesus would be near him.

Was he indeed to join Stephen and James so soon? No. in the middle of the night he was roused by a light in the prison, and an Angel struck him on the side and helped him to rise.

"Arise up quickly!" said a voice

The chains fell from Peter's wrists, and the Angel told him to tighten his girdle, bind on his sandals, and throw his cloak over him. Peter obeyed, hardly knowing what he did, for it all felt to him as though he were in a dream. Could it be true that he saw an Angel, or was it just a vision?

They passed through two inner wards, and when they came to the great gate leading into the city, it opened of its own accord, and they passed through and walked along the narrow street. But while Peter was still wondering, the Angel left him, and he found himself standing alone under the night sky.

"Now I know, of a certainty," thought Peter, "that the Lord hath sent His Angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the Jews!"

So Peter considered what he ought to do, and he decided to go to the very house where the disciples were together praying. And

## A GREAT BLOW FALLS

when he reached the house and knocked, a young girl came to the door. Her name was Rhoda. And when Rhoda knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran back amongst the praying people, insisting that Peter stood before the gate.

"Thou art mad!" they said.

But Rhoda kept to her story, and Peter went on knocking.

"It is his angel!" they said.

But at last some one went and opened the door, and there was Peter himself. He beckoned to them not to make any sound, and he entered the house, and told them the wonderful story of how the Angel had brought him forth out of prison. He told them to inform James, the Lord's brother, the president of the Jerusalem church of what had happened; but he himself went away to "another place," and where Peter went at this time, no one really knows.

But in the morning, in the prison, there was no small stir amongst the soldiers and wonder as to what had become of Peter, and when Herod Agrippa heard of the escape, he had the soldiers executed, according to the cruel custom of those days. Then he left Jerusalem and went to the city of Cæsarea.

But this was Herod's last journey. He had been intending to make war with the people of Tyre and Sidon, but peace was made, and on a certain day, Herod was arrayed in his royal robes, and sat upon his throne, and made a great oration. The people gave a shout of applause, and cried out that the king spoke as a god and not as a man. Herod, with his Jewish training, ought at once to have stopped them. But, instead, he took the applause as though he had a full right to it.

Alas for Herod! The Angel of the Lord smote him, because he took the glory to himself, and a terrible disease laid hold upon him, and he died.







## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST MISSIONARY ADVENTURE

**I**T is right that we should use the word "adventure" for the next part of our journey, for there never was an adventure, except indeed the life of Jesus Himself, so wonderful as that which Saul and Barnabas now attempted.

The Jews, living in groups in the cities of the western world, even as far as Rome, would surely mock at two Jews who came without any introduction from the high priests and elders at Jerusalem, to preach to them of a Messiah, Who had been crucified, and Who these preachers said, had risen from the grave and was now in Heaven. But worse even than this, the Jews would hate to hear that their Messiah had come not only to save the Jews, but to save all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether rich or poor, whether free or slaves.

On the other hand, the Gentiles could hardly be expected to listen to two Jews, whose race they despised, who had come to preach of a Kingdom of Love within the hearts of men; with no grandeur or glory to entice, and a Kingdom in which it was impossible to admit all the horrible cruelty and evil of which the Roman world was guilty.

Historians cannot speak too strongly of the hideous wickedness of the heathen Roman Empire at this time; yet these obscure poverty-stricken Jews, calling themselves Christians, were raising the challenge for purity and goodness, in the name of a Man whom

## THE FIRST MISSIONARY ADVENTURE

one of their own Governors, Pontius Pilate, had condemned to death as a criminal!

As Saul wrote later, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

And so it came about that this small beginning may be compared with that of a traveller who blazes a trail for the first time through some awful forest or jungle. These early Christians dared to open up a road, following John the Baptist, who had cried to the people, "Prepare ye the Way of the Lord."

This road for God is not yet completed, and is still being built and made ready, by churches, missionaries, and all followers of Jesus Christ, whether white or coloured, grown-up or children.

Saul and Barnabas, with the younger man Mark, started from Antioch, and arriving at the port of Seleucia, they set sail for Cyprus. They went from east to west of this island, and gained disciples, and then crossed the sea and came to Perga, in Pamphylia, at which place Mark took leave of them and returned to Jerusalem, for what reason we are not told.

From Perga, Saul (who had now taken his Grecian name of Paul) and Barnabas went forward to another Antioch, which we must not confuse with the Antioch in Syria, where a church had been already formed.

Now, it happened that on a certain sabbath, as the Jews were assembled in their synagogue, two strangers entered. One was a middle-aged Levite, named Barnabas, and the other was a younger man, of plain and insignificant appearance. His name was Paul. After the scripture readings, the Ruler of the Synagogue asked the strangers whether they had anything to say, and immediately the younger man stood up.

In the congregation there were pure Jews, Gentiles who had become Jews (called "Proselytes"), and Gentiles who were interested in the Jewish religion. All now listened intently as the stranger, speaking in excellent Greek, proclaimed as a world saviour a certain Jesus, of the Royal House of David, who had been murdered on a common cross, and had been raised from the dead.

The pure Jews did not oppose Paul at first; but left the synagogue that they might discuss this extraordinary sermon. But the

## THE FIRST MISSIONARY ADVENTURE

Gentiles and the Proselytes crowded about Paul, and urged him to preach to them again on the following sabbath.

During the week, Paul and Barnabas taught all who would listen to them, and on the sabbath day there was so much excitement that nearly the "whole city" came to hear. But when the strict Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and instead of supporting their fellow-countryman before the Gentiles they interrupted and contradicted, and said rude and outrageous things against Jesus Christ.

Then Paul gave up the argument, and turning round upon the Jews, he cried, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us saying: 'I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, and that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth!'"

The result of this speech was that the Gentiles were very glad to hear that they had also a right to enter this Kingdom of God. But the Jews who had refused the message were furious, and they stirred up the very religious Jews, and some of the distinguished women and the chief men of the city, to raise a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and they expelled them from the city.

Paul and Barnabas shook off the dust from their feet against them as a sign of great disapproval, and went on to Iconium, over the hilly country eastward. But those who had become disciples of Jesus through Paul's preaching remained behind, and were full of great gladness, and with the power of the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 2

### PAUL STONED

ON reaching Iconium, Paul and Barnabas made themselves known at the synagogue, and both Jews and Greeks came to hear the message from these strangers. The Greeks, being Gentiles, were more

## PAUL STONED

ready than the Jews to listen, for many of them were disgusted with their own heathen religion, and longed for something purer and better. But again the unbelieving Jews stirred up mischief, and put evil ideas against Paul and Barnabas into the minds of the rest.

God allowed the preachers to work signs and miracles, and the people were divided in opinion. Some held with Paul and Barnabas, and some held with the unbelieving Jews. In fact, both Gentiles and Jews plotted to stone them; so being warned, they fled to the wild region of Lycaonia, and entered the town of Lystra, where a strange experience was waiting for them.

Meanwhile, evil-minded Jews from Iconium were following hot on their track. The people in Lystra were very superstitious, and as Paul was preaching, he wrought the same kind of miracle as Peter did at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. He healed a lame man who had been a cripple from birth.

"Stand upright on thy feet!" said Paul, for he could see that the poor man had the faith to be healed. And immediately the man leaped up and walked. The people were amazingly excited at what had happened, and they cried out to one another that their own gods, Jupiter and Mercury, had come down to earth in human form.

"The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men!" so the news passed up and down the city. They called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury, because he was the chief speaker.

So the priest of Jupiter brought garlands and oxen to the gates of the city, and would have actually offered sacrifices to the strangers. But when Paul and Barnabas heard of it, they rent their clothes, and ran in and out amongst the crowd to stop them from doing such an absurd deed.

"We also are men of like passions with you!" they cried. "We preach that you should turn from these vain things unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that are therein. In times past, God allowed all nations to walk in their own ways, though all the time He showed that He was there, by giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filling our hearts with food and gladness."

They had the greatest difficulty in stopping the people from

## PAUL STONED

offering sacrifices to them: and now the temper of the people changed, for Jews from Iconium and Antioch arrived and said evil things about Paul and Barnabas, and aroused such opposition that the mob stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, believing that he was dead.

Was this indeed to be the end? No ; for God had greater work for Paul to do, and greater sufferings for him to endure.

As the disciples watched him anxiously, they saw to their great joy that Paul was reviving, and they helped him to rise. From a later letter of Paul's we judge that a Jewess named Eunice, who had married a Greek, and her mother Lois, were the warm-hearted hostesses of the injured preacher. If this be so, then a young man named Timothy, who had been listening so eagerly to the strange and new teaching, would be helping to do everything possible for the guests. In after days, Paul loved Timothy as though he were his own son, and constantly depended upon him for help and comfort in the hard days when he found his strength failing.

All agreed that it would not be wise to stay on in Lystra, so Paul and Barnabas managed to move on to Debe on the following day. Mercifully the evil-minded Jews did not follow them, and it is probable that they thought Paul was dead.

Paul, as we learn from his letters, was no strong athlete. He had wearisome bodily complaints which were a continual handicap to him, and it was amazing that his fragile body ever endured the life of toil, hardship, opposition, and torture, which came to him from now onwards to the end. Yet through all, he fought his good fight, and declared that he could do all things through Christ Who strengthened him.

It shows Paul's pluck, that, later, he returned fearlessly through Lystra and Iconium to Antioch, at the risk of more stoning and persecution.

But Paul had a very tender and loving heart for new converts, and he longed to see them again, and not only to urge them to hold on in faith, but to warn them that it was through tribulation that men must enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus had never promised His disciples an easy task; but He promised them a great reward.

This reward was nothing less than a, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" when all the toil was over.

## PAUL STONED

When the missionaries finally returned to Antioch in Syria, they recounted all that God had helped them to do, and they showed how the door of the Kingdom of Heaven had been thrown open so widely that the Gentiles, weary of their heathen ways and their useless idols, were accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master.

## CHAPTER 3

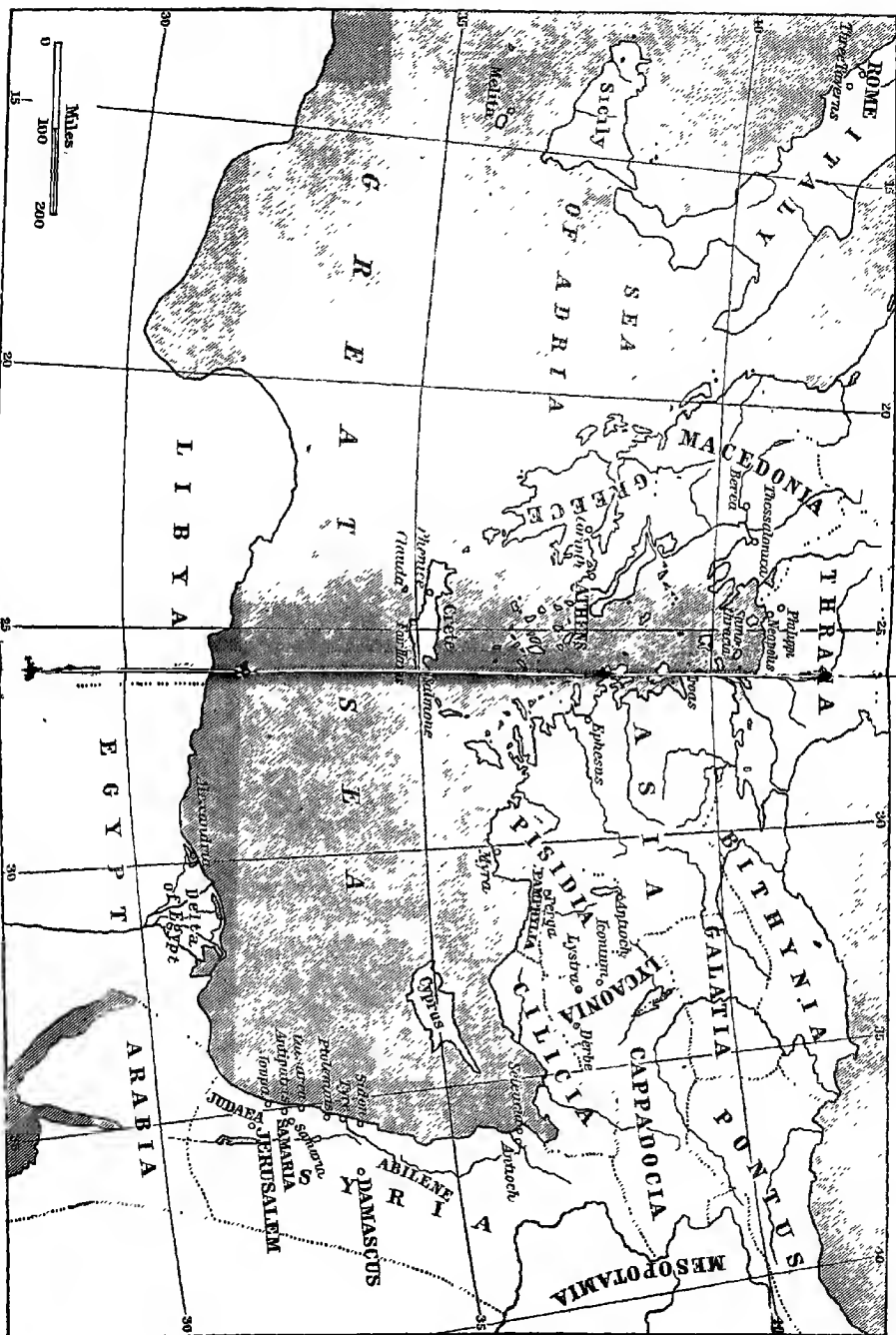
### INTO EUROPE AT LAST

THERE is no clear record of long years of missionary work, but no Apostle had as yet been across to Europe. Then it happened on a certain day that Paul reached Troas, a port on the extreme west of what we call Asia Minor. He could look right across the glorious blue Ægean Sea, dotted with its many islands to Greece, which was part of the European mainland.

That very night Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia, the eastern province of Greece, who spoke to him and prayed to him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us."

Next morning Paul told his vision to his companions. There were three of them; Silas, a missionary Jew like Paul, Luke, a Gentile doctor, whom Paul called "The beloved physician," and who did such great work for the church in writing much of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, and the young man Timothy, who had helped Paul in Lystra when he was stoned and left for dead.

It was good that Paul, who was so delicate, had a doctor to travel with him, and young Timothy to wait on him. He had, indeed, been through a bad illness, and he always had to struggle against what he called his "thorn in the flesh." We all know how the smallest thorn hurts when we run it into our finger. Three times Paul pleaded that this "thorn" might be taken away. It is supposed that it may have been some painful disease of the eyes, for in a letter to the Galatians, he writes: "For I bear you record that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me."



## INTO EUROPE AT LAST

However that may be, the Lord did not take away the "thorn," but promised Paul that His Grace would be sufficient to help him through.

Paul and his companions lost no time in answering the call to go into Macedonia, and, taking ship, they came to Samothracia, and then went on to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi. At Philippi, on the sabbath, they went down to the river side and spoke to a few women who congregated there. Here they made friends with a woman named Lydia, who, though she belonged to Thyatira in Asia, had a house for her trade in dyed stuffs in Philippi. She listened with great earnestness to the missionaries, and she and her household were baptized, and afterwards she insisted that they should all stay at her house.

It happened that there was a young girl, probably a slave, who possessed magical powers, and who brought much money to her masters by fortune-telling. She became wildly excited when in the presence of Paul and his companions, and day after day she followed them, shouting, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show us the way of salvation."

Paul's heart was grieved for the young girl, and he spoke sternly to whatever was troubling her.

"I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!"

Instantly the evil spirit came out of the distressed girl, and she became quiet and just like an ordinary person. She did not go into any wild frenzies, and she had lost her power of telling fortunes. But her masters, instead of being glad, were furious that their slave could no longer, through her strange madness, bring them in money. So they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place, before the Roman officers.

"These men," they cried to the magistrates, "are Jews, and they are greatly troubling our city. They teach customs which we cannot receive, for we are Roman citizens."

We shall remember that the Roman authorities were always anxious to avoid riots and disturbances in their districts, and when these men worked up the mob to shout and accuse Paul and Silas, they hastily decided to give in to them. They commanded that the clothes be torn off Paul and Silas, and they be beaten, and then



## INTO EUROPE AT LAST

thrown into prison; the gaoler was commanded to keep them safely.

So the gaoler thrust them into an inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks, which were probably fastened to a wall. But at midnight, Paul and Silas, in spite of their condition and their bleeding backs, sang psalms of praise to God, and the other prisoners heard them.

They were used to hearing groans and curses and wild cries, and never before had there been such sweet singing in that prison.

And then suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and doors opened and bolts and staples to which chains were fastened burst away. The gaoler, waking up from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, felt so sure that the prisoners had escaped that he drew his sword to kill himself; for he knew that execution would now be his fate.

But Paul cried out to him with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here!"

Then the gaoler called for a light, and sprang into the inner dungeon, and fell down before Paul and Silas. He brought them out, and we may think that his heart had been already touched by their patience, and perhaps by the singing of the wonderful psalms. At any rate he called out; "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

And they answered him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house."

The gaoler took these strange prisoners into his own house, and washed the wounds on their backs, and gave them food, and listened to the word of the Lord which they spake. And that very night Paul and Silas baptized the gaoler and his household.

But the magistrates had been thinking things over, and had begun to realise that they had made too hasty a judgment; so at dawn they sent word to the gaoler and his officers saying, "Let these men go."

The gaoler was glad, and said to Paul and Silas, "The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore depart and go in peace."

But Paul could not take the incident so lightly. Why should they leave the prison in secret, as though indeed they were criminals?

## INTO EUROPE AT LAST

"They have beaten us openly," he said, "uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privately? Nay, verily, let them come themselves and fetch us out!"

The sergeants told Paul's words to the magistrates, and the magistrates were more fearful than before. It was a great wrong for any Roman citizen to be punished without a proper trial. Any one might accuse these magistrates at Rome and get them punished. So the magistrates came themselves to the prison, and pleaded with Paul and Silas to leave the prison and go quietly away.

So Paul and Silas agreed, for they would not wish to make trouble even for these magistrates; and they left the prison, and went to Lydia's house; and when they had seen the other Christians, and cheered them and comforted them, they went off to the town of Thessalonica, which lay to the south-west.

It was the custom amongst the Jews for every boy to learn some hand-trade, and Paul always did his utmost to earn money by making cloth for tents, so that he need not take money from those he visited. At Thessalonica he probably worked at his trade through the week, and on the sabbath days he went to the synagogue, and tried to persuade the Jews to receive the message of Jesus Christ.

He explained and taught that it was necessary for the expected Messiah to suffer, to die, and to rise from the dead, and that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed this Messiah. Some of the Jews believed Paul, and were very friendly, and the more earnest-minded Greeks in the city were keenly interested—not only men but educated women, and they became Christians.

But the unbelieving Jews soon became jealous of Paul's success, and they stirred up a mob to surround the house of Jason, where Paul and Silas were staying, so that they might ill-treat the apostles. But Jason and the Thessalonian friends hid Paul and Silas, so that they could not be found. The Jews, however, caught Jason and some of the Christians, and dragged them before the magistrates, crying, "These men that have turned the world upside down, have arrived here, and Jason has received them. They disobey the laws of Cæsar, and they say there is another king, named Jesus!"

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So the people and the magistrates were troubled, but they did not take the matter very seriously, for they probably knew that Jason was quite harmless, and that it was out of his power to create any rebellion against the Emperor. So they took security, most likely in the form of a money fine, and then let them go.

But the Christians decided to send away Paul and Silas and Timothy at once, so they travelled through the night to a place named Berea. Here they were very kindly received, until Jews from Thessalonica arrived, and began to stir up the people against them.

It was always the same story. The unbelieving Jews hated the Christians, and especially the Jewish Christians, and over and over again they opposed Paul and other Apostles and missionaries.

So at Berea they sent Paul away, and some of their company went with him to the coast, and brought him safely by ship to Athens. But Paul, who was always of a lonely nature, urged them to send Silas and Timothy to him, without delay.

## CHAPTER 4

### PAUL PREACHES AT ATHENS

WE have all heard of Athens, the capital of Greece and of the great Empire which had spread far to the east and brought education and art and love of physical culture to the known world. But in Paul's time the glory had gone from Athens, which was now under the Roman power. There were no great artists, nor sculptors, no highly cultured philosophers and teachers. In the old Athens there had been something mighty of which to be proud; but to-day the people were idle, careless, and without the gifts which had raised them in the past.

As Paul wandered lonely in the wonderful and most beautiful city, he could see the marvellous statues to the gods and goddesses and athletes, the exquisite buildings and temples, which stood out against the brilliant blue sky. It was said that it was "easier to meet a god than a man" in Athens. But Paul, as a Jew, had been

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taught to look upon images and pictures as wrong, so the beauty of what he saw around him could not appeal as it might have done.

Paul did not neglect his work, but went at once to the synagogue, where he began with his usual patience to try to persuade the Jews that Jesus was their Messiah. The more earnest-minded Gentiles listened and were interested in his strange talk, and he felt encouraged to go out into the market-place and speak earnestly with any groups who were ready to listen to him. This Jew was very different from the Jews these Athenians knew, and though we gather from his letters that he was far from impressive in appearance, there was something about him that was attractive and lovable, and though he was poor and worked with his hands, and these idlers despised all who worked, he spoke as an educated man.

So people began to discuss him and to wonder about him, and some of the leaders of Athenian culture began to take notice of him.

"What will this babbler say?" they asked. "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods "

A "babbler" was Athenian slang for a man who picks up things that fall from loaded carts, and they meant that Paul had picked up strange ideas which were not really his own.

But as they spent their time in nothing else but telling or hearing some new thing, the chief Athenians invited Paul to go to the Areopagus.

"May we know what this new doctrine is, whereof thou speakest?"

The Areopagus was a very important and celebrated Court which had been famous for centuries for its justice and wisdom. The members of the Court were selected from the most honoured citizens in Athens and were called Areopagites. The court house took its name from the hill on which it stood, the hill of Ares (or Mars, which is the Latin name used in the Bible).

It was close to the Acropolis, or citadel, which was a fortified height, crowned with temples and other buildings, and from which there was a magnificent view of land, islands, and sea. Paul was not a prisoner, but was given the chance to say anything he chose before these Athenians who thought so highly of themselves.

Now, Paul had been greatly stirred at the sight of so many

## PAUL PREACHES AT ATHENS

idols, and though he knew that the Greeks had almost ceased to believe in them, and only looked upon their statues as wonderful works of art, he longed to draw their clever minds to the thought of the One true God. Whether Paul stood out on the hillside, or whether he was actually inside the Court, we cannot be quite sure, but it must have been an unusual sight for these Greeks to find themselves listening to this pale, delicate, and poverty-stricken Jew.

But Paul opened wisely and politely by telling his audience that he had noticed that they were most specially religious and that as he had walked about in their city he had noticed the gods which they worshipped, and had been particularly struck by an altar on which was an inscription "To the Unknown God." This gave him his chance to follow on by saying that this Unknown God, which they worshipped in ignorance, was the very God about whom he wished to speak.

"God that made the world, and all things therein," went on Paul, "seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men. . . . In this God, we live and move and have our being; as certain of your own poets have said, 'For we are also God's offspring.' Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or carved stone."

Many of the audience would agree with some of this, for they had ceased to worship the old Greek gods; but when Paul went on to speak of Jesus, and a judgment, and of how Jesus had risen from the dead, they lost interest.

"We will hear thee again of this matter!" said some politely, while others mocked openly.

Paul was a nobody, was not worth attention.

So Paul left the Areopagus, but one of the Areopagites and some others became Christians, as did also a woman named Damaris. And though that sermon seemed to be a great failure—yet, in days to come, Christians formed a church in Athens; but Paul himself never again visited the famous city.

## YEARS OF SPLENDID WORK

### CHAPTER 5

#### YEARS OF SPLENDID WORK

WE now pass on for about three years from the time Paul left Athens. In spite of set-backs, and disappointments, men and women had been won to serve Jesus Christ, not only by the preaching of Paul but by others. Paul himself found many true-hearted friends, on whom he poured out the love of his affectionate nature, and he had the intense joy of seeing many a little "church" formed.

Immediately after leaving Athens, he had gone to Corinth, which was a very wicked city. Here he gained two of his most devoted friends, named Priscilla and Aquila. They were tent-makers, and as Paul was a tent-maker himself, he worked with them for about eighteen months. What long happy times they had together, while Paul toiled at his work, and talked about Jesus Christ to any who cared to listen!

During his stay in Corinth, the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, and said, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace. For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city."

During these three years Paul visited Jerusalem, and greeted James, the head of the Church at Jerusalem, and other Christians. The Bible gives scarcely any further record of what the rest of the twelve Apostles were doing, so Paul may or may not have seen some of them. They were probably widely scattered, carrying out the command of their Master, to go out into the world to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God.

### CHAPTER 6

#### THE RIOT AT EPHESUS

EPHESUS was a great and important city on the western side of Asia Minor. It contained a very mixed population. The Jews in

## THE RIOT AT EPHEBUS

Ephesus were engaged in commerce, and had received special privileges from the Roman Emperor. Their religion was allowed, and their boys were exempted from joining the Roman armies.

Paul chose Ephesus as his headquarters for about two years, and he and others preached in the towns and villages round about so diligently that Luke reports, "So mightily grew the word of God and prospered."

Priscilla and Aquila came to settle in Ephesus, so Paul was able to lodge with them, and he went on with his trade. He also did much study and wrote letters, and thought out how he might best help the new struggling churches.

It is difficult for us to imagine how different life was for the Christian boys and girls of those days from what it is for us. With us, there are churches, Sunday schools, and Bible lessons in our schools, and no one is surprised. But in Ephesus, and in all the surroundings of the new churches, the people were puzzled and surprised, and went on worshipping their idols, or worshipping nothing at all, and except for a few of the more serious-minded people, they did not seem to care anything about goodness and purity and truth, and did not seem to think that it mattered whether they did right or wrong.

Yet there were sad, unhappy people amongst these nations, and when Paul and his brother missionaries began to speak of Jesus and His wonderful life and death, their hearts were touched, and, like lost sheep, they heard a shepherd's voice calling them.

Timothy was with Paul for part of this period; and as his grandmother and mother had grounded him well in the Scriptures, and he knew all the history of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, the kings and the prophets, he was a most interesting companion, and Paul enjoyed teaching this young man who would, later, be a teacher himself.

But all this time, in his secret heart, Paul longed to go to Rome, for he knew that if once the Romans accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, they had the power to carry the message to the furthest bounds of the Empire—even as far as Spain, Great Britain, and the coast of Africa.

Now, in Ephesus there was a most wonderful temple, dedicated

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to the goddess Diana or Artemis, which was one of the wonders of the world, and which people travelled from great distances to see. It is all in ruins now, but there is part of it in the British Museum, which gives some idea of the kind of work men put into their buildings in those days.

When we think of Diana, we think of a beautiful huntress, or of the moon. But the precious idol in the temple at Ephesus was nothing but a hideous lump of wood. Yet it was so sacred it was kept in an inner shrine of the Temple, and people were so in awe of its power that the state money was kept in a room behind, and was considered to be quite safe with this image to guard it.

The silversmiths in Ephesus grew wealthy by making silver models of the Temple and shrine, and so it came about that as people began talking of Paul and his message, and churches sprang up in the district round about, the silversmiths became alarmed for their trade. If every one should believe Paul and become Christians, who would buy their shrines?

Now, there was a certain well-known silversmith named Demetrius, who saw this danger quite clearly, and he called together the other silversmiths in consultation.

"Sirs," he said, "ye know that by this craft of making shrines we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear that, not alone at Ephesus but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands. So that not only is our craft in danger, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana is likely to become despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth."

Demetrius spoke so passionately, and argued so well, that the audience was filled with wrath. All he said was quite true, and the danger must be stopped.

So they yelled forth in wild uproar, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians! Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

The whole city was now filled with excitement, and some of the craftsmen, having caught two of Paul's companions, named Gaius and Aristarchus, rushed them into the great theatre, so that they might be accused.



## THE RIOT AT EPHESUS

Paul, with his usual courage, instantly wished to press his way into the theatre to stand by his companions; but the other disciples stopped him; for they knew that the sight of Paul would make the excitement grow still more dangerously. As for the crowd, it was like many another crowd, altogether confused as to why it had come together, and the majority did not really understand anything about it.

A Jew named Alexander was now put forward, and he beckoned with his hand, trying to calm down the crowd, so that they could hear the defence. But that was no use! As soon as they saw he was a Jew, they yelled and shouted for two hours: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians! Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

The town clerk was called, for it was his duty to prevent all such disturbance of the public peace, and at last silence was called, and he managed to appeal to them in all seriousness.

"Ye men of Ephesus," he said sensibly, "what man is there here that knoweth not how the citizens of Ephesus all worship the great goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly. For ye have arrested these men, which are neither robbers of temples nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore, if Demetrius and the craftsmen which are with him have a matter against any man, the courts are open and there are judges. We are in danger of being called in question for this day's uproar—for there is no cause whereby we can give an account of this crowd."

His words were sensible enough, and we can see that he had the just Roman outlook, and we shall remember that the Roman officials were always afraid of being reprimanded from Rome, if they allowed any tumult in their districts.

So at last the people were persuaded to go away quietly. But it was clear to Paul that he must leave Ephesus, lest he should bring trouble on his fellow Christians; so, having embraced the disciples and said many words of loving farewell, he left for Macedonia.

## OFF TO JERUSALEM

### CHAPTER 7

#### OFF TO JERUSALEM

THOUGH Paul's task was still unfinished, he was fast reaching the end of a stage. Thus far on his journey, he had worked as a free man; but very soon his days of personal freedom would be over, and he would work as the "Prisoner of Jesus Christ," as he liked to call himself.

Perhaps we shall be rather glad that Paul was no longer to endure the dangers of mobs and scourgings and dangerous travels; but to a man of his unbounded energy he was going to find his patience and trust in God severely tested as, year after year, he remained in prison, or at any rate as a prisoner.

Paul was still bent upon preaching in Rome; but before turning westward he had a longing to attend the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Yet he must have known that trouble might spring out upon him in Jerusalem, for his own success and the success of his fellow missionaries, in establishing these centres of Christianity amongst the Gentiles, would make his Jewish enemies more jealous and revengeful than ever.

Let us imagine Paul on board a sailing ship, with a small group of Christians, amongst whom were Luke and Aristarchus. We wonder what they talked about as the ship cut through the waves. They were sailing south, keeping close to the western coast of Asia, and we are sure that, in spite of all troubles, Paul never hinted that he regretted having thrown over his easy, comfortable life as a respected Pharisee, to become an outcast for Jesus Christ. There was no time to stop at Ephesus, but on reaching Miletus, a few miles further on, they went ashore, and Paul sent urgently for his Ephesian friends, so that he might wish them "good-bye."

Priscilla and Aquila would be sure to come, as would others who loved Paul so dearly, and the great Apostle's heart overflowed with gladness at seeing them. Some of these Christians had already suffered severe persecution, and Paul gave them words of comfort and warning. Then he added:

"Behold I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing

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the things that will befall me there; except that the Holy Spirit tells me that chains and imprisonment lie in wait for me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy."

In one of his letters, Paul compares life with a race, in which the runners cast away everything that hinders them, so that they may run with patience and courage and allow nothing to stop them until they reach the goal.

"And now," he said tenderly, "I know that ye all, among whom I have preached, shall see my face no more."

And after Paul had given them his last messages, he kneeled and prayed with them. They kissed one another, and every one wept bitterly, for their hearts were sore indeed, and especially because Paul had said, "Ye shall see my face no more."

The whole group went down to the quay to watch the voyagers embark. The anchor was raised, the cords loosened, the sails spread, and all tried to smile bravely, we may be sure, until the ship was out of sight.

They sailed in sight of much beautiful scenery to Patara, and then they struck out for Tyre, in Syria, where the ship had to unload her cargo. In Tyre they stayed while the ship was unloaded, and the disciples there pleaded with Paul that he should not venture to go to Jerusalem. But it was useless to try to persuade Paul against doing what he believed God wished him to do. So the warm-hearted Christians, men, women, and children, escorted Paul and Luke and Aristarchus and others from the city; and when they reached the shore, Paul kneeled and prayed, and others prayed also.

We should like to know what kind and tender words they spoke to one another, and we shall like to think that the boys and girls clung about Paul and wished him "God-speed"; or perhaps they said to him wistfully, "Please, Rabbi, do not go to Jerusalem!"

But if they did, Paul shook his head and smiled and kissed them, and when he took ship they all waved a sad farewell.

The party left the ship at Ptolemais, stayed one night there, and then went on to Cæsarea by land. Here they received great hospitality from Philip the Evangelist, whom we shall remember

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as having baptized the Ethiopian very soon after Jesus had ascended to heaven.

Philip had four Christian daughters, and as it was a little early for the Feast of Pentecost they stayed on at Cæsarea for a short time. Here again Paul received a warning from a Christian prophet named Agabus, who took Paul's girdle and bound it round his own hands and feet, and then said solemnly, "Thus saith the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and deliver him over unto the Gentiles.'"

"And when we heard these things," writes Luke, "we besought Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.

"But Paul answered, 'What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.'

"And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.'"





## Part Seven

### CHAPTER I

#### PAUL'S LAST DAY OF FREEDOM

**W**HEN Paul, Luke, and the others arrived in Jerusalem, they received a hearty welcome from the "brethren," and on the following day the president of the Jerusalem church, the Lord's brother, James, greeted Paul.

It is curious that we hear very little of the other Apostles, though from later history it is clear that they must have been busy preaching and teaching, for churches rose, of which the names of their founders no one knows. There is the scantiest record of Peter after the time that he escaped from Jerusalem, and of some of the Apostles no word had come down to us at all.

There is a legend that Thomas went as far as India, preaching of Jesus, and the great Christian church of Alexandria may have been founded by Mark. But we, who live nearly two thousand years after these times, may be happy that we know even as much as we do. In the persecutions of Christians which follow so soon, priceless records would be destroyed, which might have told us a great deal about what we should like to know.

Paul must have been thrilled to be in Jerusalem again, even though his heart was stirred by many sad thoughts. He had

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suffered enormously on behalf of Jesus; yet how could he complain when he remembered how he himself had been the cause of such suffering amongst the early disciples, and how he had stood by when Stephen was stoned? Paul always thought of himself as the "least" of the Apostles, and constantly confessed his early sin. Indeed he even called himself the "chief of sinners."

Now, there was no doubt that the Jerusalem Christians were rather anxious about Paul, because of his work amongst the Gentiles; and as they wished to prove to the non-Christian Jews that he was still a true Jew, they suggested a plan to him, which Paul accepted, in order to please them. He was to pay the charges of four young men who had taken a vow so that they might fulfil the regulations which the law of Moses demanded. So Paul agreed and paid the charges, and purified himself, and shaved his head as was the custom, and presented himself at the Temple.

There was also a young Greek named Trophimus, who was one of those who arrived in Jerusalem with Paul. Paul was very fond of him, and took him about in Jerusalem, but he was most careful not to take him further than the Gentile Court, for he must not pass the barrier upon which Jesus had read as a boy that no Gentile might go beyond it on pain of death. Even the Roman Governors respected the Jewish regulations about the Gentiles, and would never have dreamed of passing this barrier.

But, alas! Paul's care did not really help, for every one knew that he preached to the Gentiles, and admitted them to be Christians without making them carry out the regulations of the Law. So it came about that some of Paul's enemies from Ephesus arrived in Jerusalem, and spied Trophimus, whom they knew as an Ephesian, walking with Paul. They may have even seen them together in the Court of the Gentiles, where they had the right to be. It was this Court which Jesus cleared of the money-changers and the animals, when He told the Jews that His Father's House was a House for all nations.

But these evil-minded Ephesians thought that they could make out a great case against Paul, by accusing him of having taken a Gentile into the sacred part of the Temple. Such an act would rouse the Jerusalem Jews to fury. So they watched their chance,

## PAUL'S LAST DAY OF FREEDOM

and when the crowds had gathered in the Temple they seized upon Paul and began to shout excitedly, "Men of Israel help!"

Every one turned to listen, and crowded to know what was the matter, for any crowd is easily stirred to frenzy, as Paul had already learnt.

"This is the man," they shouted, "who teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the Law, and this place, and hath brought Gentiles into the Temple and polluted the Holy Place!"

Instantly, as we shall expect, the whole city was in an uproar, and the crowds thronged up the Temple steps. They seized Paul, and dragged him into the Court of the Gentiles to make sure that no blood was spilt in the sacred place, and the priests hastily shut the Temple doors, to keep out the mob. Paul was now in the hands of his Jewish enemies, and the ignorant and deceived people yelled for his blood, as they had yelled for the blood of Jesus.

The Roman Tower of Antonia was situated on the north-west of the Temple. It had four towers, one of which completely overlooked the Temple Courts, and a pillared cloister extended from this castle to the Temple. The Romans, knowing the excitable Jews so well, kept a guard on the roof of this cloister, so that the garrison could at any moment make a rush to stop rioting. So, the instant the news came to the chief Captain that the Temple Courts were crowded with uproarious Jews, he took Centurions and soldiers, and hurried down into the midst of the tumult.

Now, the Roman power was held in great respect, for it was strong, and on the whole fair, and when the Jews heard the outcries, and saw that the Roman garrison had arrived amongst them, they hastily decided to leave off beating Paul, in case of further trouble.

The chief Captain was right upon them, and he commanded this man, who was being so ill-treated, to be arrested and bound with two chains. Having secured him he now demanded of the Jews who he was and what he had done. No wonder the wild shouting broke out again! Was their victim going to escape them after all? Some cried one thing and some cried another, and as the Roman Captain could make nothing of it, he ordered some of the soldiers to get Paul safely into the castle.

That was easier commanded than done! When they reached

## PAUL'S LAST DAY OF FREEDOM

the staircase, the mob became so passionately violent at the thought that they were losing their chance of murdering Paul, that the soldiers had to carry him right out of their reach.

"Away with him! Away with him!" shouted the multitude savagely, as they had shouted not so many years ago. But Paul was anything but a coward, and he did not wish to escape from his enemies in this way, so he asked if he might speak to the Captain.

"Canst thou speak Greek?" exclaimed the Captain. "Art thou not that Egyptian which made an uproar, and led out into the wilderness four thousand men who were murderers?"

"No," said Paul quietly. "I am a Jew of Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city, and I beseech thee to allow me to speak unto the people."

The Captain was used to arresting all classes of men, on all classes of charges, and he must have been surprised as he looked at Paul, and saw at once that he was not like any ordinary criminal. He was wounded, and in pain, yet he was evidently a brave man, and a Roman always respected any one who was fearless and brave. So he gave him leave to speak.

Luke, the doctor, was probably present in the crowd, for it is Luke who gives us the report of what happened. Paul stood out on the stairs, and the Captain must have admired his courage as he raised his hand to beckon to that furious crowd. But suddenly a great silence fell. After all, many of the people did not probably know why they had been shouting.

Paul surprised the Captain by now speaking in Hebrew or Aramaic, the tongue of Syria, and as he began the silence became deeper. Here, in this great crisis, Paul made a great confession, as though to show these angry Jews that he could sympathise with them in their anger.

"Men, brethren and fathers!" he pleaded "Hear ye my defence which I now make unto you. I am verily a Jew, born in Tarsus, yet brought up in this city, as a scholar under Gamaliel, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. I persecuted unto the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women, as also the High Priest and elders will bear me witness, from whom I received letters to Damascus to bring them that were there bound unto Jerusalem to be punished."



## PAUL'S LAST DAY OF FREEDOM

Then Paul told them of how the light had blinded him, and how Jesus had spoken to him. Paul confessed that he had beaten in the synagogues those who believed in Jesus, and had stood by when Stephen was stoned to death. And at last he came to the dangerous point. He proclaimed that God Himself had commanded him to go far out into the world to proclaim Jesus to the Gentiles.

The silence broke. The crowd shouted and gesticulated, and cried once more, "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live!"

They got so excited that they cast off their clothes and threw dust into the air. So the Captain, still quite puzzled, for he may not have known Hebrew, commanded the prisoner to be brought into the castle, and in order to find out from Paul what he had really done, he commanded that he should be tortured by scourging.

And as they bound him, Paul said to the Centurion who was now in command. "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

When the Centurion heard that, he went at once to the Captain to report.

"Take heed what thou doest," he said, "for this man is a Roman citizen."

The Captain came along at once, and said, "Tell me, art thou a Roman?"

And Paul said, "Yes."

The Captain answered, "With a great sum obtained I this freedom."

"But I was born free," said Paul quietly.

So those who were about to scourge Paul were sent away, and the Captain himself was afraid, because he had ordered him to be bound. So he loosed Paul from his chains, and on the morrow he brought him before the Jewish Council, and set him, a prisoner, before them, so that he might get to understand what the charge against Paul really was. But the moment Paul began to speak, Ananias the High Priest commanded him to be struck on the mouth.

"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," said Paul, "for sittest thou to judge me according to the law, yet commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?"

"Revilest thou God's High Priest?" asked some one indignantly.

## PAUL'S LAST DAY OF FREEDOM

"I did not know, brethren," answered Paul, "that he was the High Priest."

Then Paul declared himself to be a Pharisee, and announced that it was really because he believed in the resurrection of the dead that he was being now called before the Council. Paul knew that such a defence would divide the Council into two jealous parties, for the Pharisees believed strongly that the dead rose again, but the Sadducees believed that there was no resurrection.

Whether Paul was right in doing this, it is hard to judge, but the result was that fierce arguments followed between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Sides were taken, and the Pharisees instantly stood up for their fellow-Pharisee Paul.

"We find no evil in this man!" they cried. "If a spirit or an Angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

Their quarrelling became so fierce that the Captain, fearing lest the prisoner should be torn in pieces before his eyes, commanded the soldiers to bring Paul by force back into the safety of the castle.

What was Paul thinking, as he lay in the castle? That night he received a wonderful visitor. The Lord Himself stood by him.

"Be of good cheer, Paul," said a heavenly voice, "for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou also bear witness at Rome."

A great peace fell upon Paul's spirit, and all his worry and strain disappeared. Nothing mattered, so long as his Lord and Master was pleased with him. He now knew that his longing to go to Rome was to be granted. He was not to go as a free man, but as a prisoner.

## CHAPTER 12

### PAUL'S NEPHEW DISCOVERS A PLOT

THE Jews were quite shrewd enough to guess that they had very little chance of getting Paul condemned to death by the Romans, and that their best hope of getting rid of him was to murder him.

## PAUL'S NEPHEW DISCOVERS A PLOT

So early next morning certain Jews bound themselves together under a great curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty of them to make this conspiracy, and they were not ashamed to go to the chief priest and the elders, so that they might carry out the plot. We shall indeed be reminded of how Judas plotted against his Master, Who had never wished him anything but good.

"We have bound ourselves," said the speaker, "under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Now therefore urge the chief Captain to bring him again before the Council as though you had more important questions to ask him. And then we, before ever he arrives at the Council, will set upon him and kill him."

Now, it came about that a young nephew of Paul's, a son of one of his sisters, came to know of this plot, and instantly he went to the castle and asked to see his uncle. He told his story, and Paul called one of the Centurion guards, and asked him to take the boy to the chief Captain, because he had something important to tell him. So the Centurion took the young man or boy, and explained to the chief Captain why he had ventured to come.

"Paul, the prisoner," he said, "called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say."

Then the chief Captain put out his hand, and drew the boy aside. "What is it that thou hast to tell me?" he asked kindly.

"The Jews," said the boy, "have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the Council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly. But do not thou yield unto them, for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, looking for a promise from thee."

The Captain believed this eager boy, and said to him before he left, "See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me."

And the Captain wasted no time, for it would be a great disgrace to him to have a prisoner murdered, and he called two centurions and gave them their orders: "Make ready two hundred

## PAUL'S NEPHEW DISCOVERS A PLOT

soldiers to go to Cæsarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; and provide them beasts that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor."

Then he wrote a letter to the governor at Cæsarea, and this is what he said: "Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.

"This man was taken of the Jews, and would have been killed of them; then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he is a Roman. And when I would have known the cause whereof they accused him, I brought him forth to their Council. I perceived, however, that he was accused of certain questions of their own law, and that there was nothing against him worthy of death or bonds. And when it was told me that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also, to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell "

We shall think that this was a fair and clear letter.

It must have been a surprise to Paul when he was waked up in the dead of night and put on horseback. A few days before, he had ridden into Jerusalem, chatting with Luke, Aristarchus, and others, and now he was riding under the stars, surrounded by soldiers, on his way to Cæsarea. By the morning they reached Antipatris, and the soldiers returned to Jerusalem, but the horsemen continued with Paul. On reaching Cæsarea the letter was delivered, and Paul was presented to Felix. Again it seems that he won attention and respect.

"I will hear thee," said Felix, "when thine accusers are also come," and he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Judgment Hall.

We can imagine that there were furious hearts in Jerusalem when it became known that Paul had escaped, and the conspirators must have wished that they had not sworn such a wicked and foolish oath. The Captain had shown himself to be wise and merciful, for he knew that this strange and remarkable Jew would not get a fair trial in Jerusalem. The Jews knew that, too, and they hated the thought of having to go to Cæsarea to present their accusations, without the backing of the fanatical mob.

## PAUL'S NEPHEW DISCOVERS A PLOT

Within five days Felix brought out his prisoner to face his accusers. Ananias was at their head, and he brought a special orator or barrister, named Tertullus, to make sure that Paul did not get the best of the argument. The accusations were vague, and Felix listened with indifference, probably only half understanding what it was all about.

Paul was, according to Tertullus, a "pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition or treason among the Jews throughout the world, a ring-leader of the sect of Nazarenes, and worst of all had profaned the Temple by bringing in Gentiles to the sacred parts."

After the Governor had beckoned to Paul to answer, the prisoner spoke readily: "Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been for many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because thou mayest understand that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. And they neither found me in the Temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogue nor in the city. Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me."

Paul then went on to explain further, and submitted that the Jews from Ephesus who had first stirred up the riot ought to have been there as witnesses.

"Let these same here say if they have found any evil doing in me before the Council, except that I cried, 'Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day.'"

It is thought that Paul regretted having won a point by setting the Pharisees and the Sadducees against one another when he was before the Council.

But Felix could judge that there was no cause for punishment for such a man, on any evidence he had yet heard; so he made an excuse that he would call Lysias the chief Captain, so that he might hear more details. As a matter of fact he never did call him; but he commanded the Centurion to treat Paul with respect, and to let him have liberty, and to allow his friends to visit him and help him in his need.

We may be sure that Philip and his daughters and other Christians brought Paul all that he needed, and that Luke looked after his health and comfort as far as he could.

## PAUL'S NEPHEW DISCOVERS A PLOT

Now, Felix was noted for his wicked ways, and, like Herod, he had stolen his wife Drusilla from another man. Drusilla was a Jewess, and one day Felix sent for Paul, so that he might explain more clearly about Jesus Christ. And as Paul poured out his solemn message Felix trembled and he sent Paul away, saying that he would hear him again later. This Felix did, and he had several talks with Paul. But he was a weak man, and could not make up his mind to forsake his evil ways and accept Jesus as his Lord. Also, being mean and grasping, he hoped that Paul would offer him a bribe to release him.

But Paul was not the sort of man to bribe any one, and so the weeks, months, and even years passed, in anxious waiting for justice, until Paul had been two full years under guard. Then at last there was news that a new Governor had been appointed and again Paul's heart would leap with hope.

But Felix, anxious to keep in favour with the Jews when he gave up his Governorship left Paul still in prison, for the new Governor, Festus, to find.

## CHAPTER 13

### PAUL APPEALS TO CÆSAR

Now even as Paul had hopes that with a new Governor he might have some chance of justice, the Jews at Jerusalem, who had not forgotten him, thought they saw a chance of getting their revenge at last. So when Festus arrived in Jerusalem on an official visit, they begged him as a favour that he would have the prisoner Paul returned to Jerusalem that he might be judged there.

For amongst themselves they had a plot all prepared to kill him during the journey. But Festus saw through their scheming, and told them that he himself would be returning shortly to Cæsarea, and added, "Let them therefore among you, who are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him."

This was not what the Jews wanted, but there was nothing for it but to agree; so in about ten days Festus returned to Cæsarea, and, ascending his judgment chair, he commanded Paul to be

## PAUL APPEALS TO CÆSAR

brought. The accusers stood forth and laid many dreadful complaints against Paul, none of which they could prove, as Festus noticed, for they had brought no witnesses, and at last Festus, seeing also that the accusations did not agree with each other, called upon the prisoner to make his defence.

"Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the Temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended anything at all," said Paul quietly.

Festus could see clearly enough that Paul the prisoner was no liar, but being anxious to give pleasure to the Jews, he said to Paul, "Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?"

Paul must have been surprised that this Roman Governor actually gave him such a choice. But he was now ready with his answer. He was a Roman citizen, and one of the most valued rights of such a citizen was that, if accused of any crime, he might appeal to Cæsar, and claim to be judged before the Roman Emperor himself. Paul knew that to return to Jerusalem meant riot and mob passion, and perhaps assassination. He had more chance of Justice at Rome. Therefore he surprised Festus by answering, "I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged; to the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou very well knowest; for if I be an offender, I refuse not to die, but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man can deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar!"

We can be sure that there was great wrath and exasperation amongst the Jews on hearing this. The man whom they wished to slaughter was to travel under guard to Rome. Their power over him was gone. Festus consulted his Council for a few moments, and then he turned to the prisoner:

"Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? Unto Cæsar shalt thou go!"

As Paul was taken back under guard he now knew for certain that he was to go to Rome. If the Jews wished to follow up their accusations they would have to go themselves to Rome and make them before the Emperor himself. Shortly after this, there was great public excitement in Cæsarea. The last of the Herods, Herod Agrippa II., was arriving with his sister, Bernice, to pay his respects to the new Governor. There was much pomp and

## PAUL APPEALS TO CÆSAR

feasting for some days, and one day Festus told Agrippa about Paul.

"There is a certain man," he explained, "left in bonds by Felix; about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have a judgment against him. To whom I answered, 'It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have leave to answer for himself concerning the crimes laid against him.' Therefore when they were come hither, I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. But the accusers brought no accusations of such things as I supposed, but had certain questions against him of their own superstitions, and of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved for judgment before Augustus Cæsar I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cæsar."

Agrippa was interested in Festus's story, and asked that he might hear Paul for himself. He himself was partly a Jew, and he had probably heard of Jesus. It was his great-grandfather who had killed the Bethlehem babies, his great-uncle who had killed John the Baptist, and his father who had killed James the Apostle. So next day Festus arranged for a great gathering of the chief people in Cæsarea. They came in state, in their grandest robes and jewels, to meet King Agrippa and his sister and to hear a poor prisoner in chains. This was not a trial; but as Paul was brought forth and looked about him, he knew that his Lord had given him a marvellous chance of telling these important people about Jesus Christ.

Festus made a perfectly frank statement during which Paul was present.

"King Agrippa," he said, "and all men here present, ye see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, crying that he ought not to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my Lord. I have brought him before you, and especially before thee, O King Agrippa,



## PAUL APPEALS TO CÆSAR

that after examination I may have something to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not with him send also the crimes which are laid against him."

Then King Agrippa looked towards Paul, and said, "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself!" There were no accusers thirsting for his blood; and Paul, expressing himself in Greek, would be recognised by the distinguished assembly as a highly educated man of culture. It was a great chance to tell his story. So he told it, the story we now know so well, and as he drew to a close his earnestness increased, and he said:

"Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come. That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."

Clearly the speaker impressed and surprised his audience, and Festus suddenly interrupted by saying, "Paul—thou art beside thyself! Much learning doth make thee mad!"

But Paul answered respectfully, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness, for the king knoweth of these things, before whom I speak freely, for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him, for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa! Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest!"

Paul seemed to have forgotten that he was a prisoner; he was speaking as an educated Rabbi to the king. Then Agrippa charged Paul with the wish to make him a Christian.

"I would to God," said Paul passionately, "that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were altogether such as I am, except these bonds!"

The king rose, as a signal that the interview was over, and he and Bernice and the Governor and others spoke together about this remarkable prisoner.

"This man," said Agrippa to Festus, "might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar."

Perhaps Festus regretted that he had not set Paul at liberty at once, when he found that the Jews had nothing against him, before Paul had made his appeal.

## PAUL GOES TO ROME

### CHAPTER 14

#### PAUL GOES TO ROME

PAUL's faithful friend Luke was with him when he was taken as a prisoner to Rome, and it was Luke who gives us the account of the very adventurous shipwreck which occurred. Sailors tell us that Luke evidently knew all about sailing vessels, as the descriptions are so true to what must have happened

Shipwrecks were common in those days, for ships were fragile, and the charts of the seas were very incomplete. It was considered dangerous to sail on the Mediterranean Sea after September 14th and no one ventured at all after November 11th.

Julius, a Roman Centurion, was taking a batch of prisoners to Rome, and amongst them was Paul. He had probably received instruction to treat Paul with respect, and Paul's personality soon showed that he was no common prisoner. Luke and Aristarchus were allowed to travel with him so that they might serve and help him. But there was some anxiety on the vessel, for they had started late in the autumn; and having passed Cyprus, they sailed against the contrary winds to Myra

Here they changed into a grain ship which had come from Alexandria. And now let Luke tell us his own story, and we can trace the voyage on the map.

"And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone. And hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The Fair Havens. Now, when much time was spent, and sailing was now dangerous, Paul admonished the Centurion and others, and said, 'Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with injury and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.'

"Nevertheless the Centurion believed the master and owner of the ship, more than those things that were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to go on and seek to reach Phenice. And when the south

## PAUL GOES TO ROME

wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing from Fair Havens, they sailed close by Crete.

"But not long after, there arose against the ship a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. And running under a certain island, called Claudia, we had much work to haul in the boat, which, when they had taken up, they used helps to bind the ship together, and then, fearing quicksands, they strake sail, and so were driven.

"And we, being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship. And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

"But after long abstinence from food, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, 'Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night, the Angel of God, Whose I am and Whom I serve, saying: "Fear not, Paul. Thou must be brought before Cæsar; and lo, God hath given thee all that sail with thee!" Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told to me. Howbeit, we must be cast upon a certain island.'

"And when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in the sea of Adria, about midnight the shipmen guessed that they drew near to land. So they sounded, and found it was twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little further they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. Then, fearing lest they should strike rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern and wished for daylight.

"And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under the pretence that they would cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the Centurion and to the soldiers, 'Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved.'

"Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat and let her fall off. And when the day was coming on, Paul besought them

## PAUL GOES TO ROME

all to take food, saying, 'I pray you to take some food, for this is for your health, for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.'

"And when he had thus spoken, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then they were all of good cheer, and they also took food. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and cast out the wheat into the sea.

"And when it was day, they did not recognise the land, but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they decided if possible to thrust in the ship. And when they had cut the anchors leaving them in the sea, they loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind and made for the beach. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves

"The soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape. But the Centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves into the sea and get to land. And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, followed, and so it came to pass, that they all escaped safe to land."

Clearly Paul had been the hero of the voyage, for without him, all would have been lost.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE ISLAND OF MELITA OR MALTA

It was indeed a pathetic and wretched, sea-soaked party that gathered on the shores of that unknown island. It would not have been strange if the inhabitants had rushed down upon them and slaughtered every one. But, instead, these "barbarous" people, as Luke calls them, showed them every kindness. They kindled fires, because of the cold and rain, and Paul, always ready to help, gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire.

## THE ISLAND OF MELITA OR MALTA

But the islanders were horrified to see a viper come out from the heat and fasten itself upon his hand. Instantly they imagined that this man must be some terrible criminal, perhaps a murderer, who had come safely through the waves but was not to be allowed to live. But Paul just shook off the beast into the fire and felt no harm. They stared at him anxiously, feeling sure that he would swell up with the viper's poison, or fall down dead. But after they had looked for some time, and nothing happened, they changed their minds, and believed that he must be a god.

Now, there was a man named Publius, who was the chief man of the island, who came along to look after these stranded guests, and for three days he received them all and lodged them most courteously. The father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and Paul was able to pray over him, and to heal him.

We cannot be surprised that the islanders immediately brought their sick to Paul, and Paul, in the name of Jesus, was enabled to heal them all.

There was another grain ship from Alexandria wintering in the island, with the name of *Castor and Pollux*, after the heathen twin gods of those names. But the party had to remain for three months before it was safe for them to set sail. We may be sure that Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus did some good work in helping the islanders to know of Jesus and His love for mankind.

## CHAPTER 6

### ROME AT LAST

News had reached the Roman Christians that Paul was on his way, and some of them took a ten mile journey from Rome to meet him at a place called *The Three Taverns*. He must have been greatly cheered to receive their kindly greetings, for it is not every one who cares to admit himself a friend of a prisoner. The visit made Paul thank God and take courage.

The Centurion delivered the prisoners to the Captain of the Guard, and we may be sure that he gave a good account of Paul's

courage during the shipwreck. Whatever letter had been sent with Paul from Festus was now lost, and no accusers from Jerusalem had arrived; indeed there is nothing in the Bible to tell us that they ever did arrive. Paul found himself treated with special consideration, and he was allowed to live in his own hired house, to which his friends could come freely.

One minor trouble was that he had to be continually in the presence of a soldier, and the custom was for a soldier on guard to have his left hand chained to the prisoner's right hand. It must have been a strange experience for a rough Roman soldier to have to spend hour after hour with a prisoner who was always brave, thoughtful, courteous, and patient. As the soldiers were constantly changed, Paul became well known to all the neighbouring garrison.

After three days he called together the chiefs of the synagogues to visit him, as he himself could not leave his house. He was anxious to explain his position and what had happened to him at Jerusalem. They came, but it is clear that they were not friendly to this prisoner, who had once been so brilliant a Pharisee, but had forsaken Judaism and was preaching that the crucified Jesus was the true Messiah of God.

"Men and brethren," said Paul earnestly, "though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans; who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar, though I had nothing of which to accuse my nation. For this cause, therefore, have I called you, to see you and to speak with you; because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

The Jews listened, and then answered, "We neither received letters out of Judæa concerning thee, and none who have come from thence have spoken any harm of thee; but we desire to hear more of what thou thinkest, for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

Paul could scarcely expect a better answer than that, and he was glad to appoint a day, so that he might explain more fully what we may now call the "Christian" message.

## ROME AT LAST

A large number of Jews therefore came early one morning to Paul's lodging, and all through the day and right into the evening Paul tried to preach to them of the Kingdom of God and what Jesus had meant by it. He showed himself learned in the Scriptures, and quoted from Moses and the prophets, so that he might convince them that Jesus was indeed the expected Messiah—the son of God, of the seed of Abraham, in Whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. Some believed Paul, and some believed not, and they argued eagerly amongst themselves as to whether he was right or not.

And Paul, grieved and perhaps disappointed, broke out sorrowfully, "Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers saying:

"Go unto this people, and say, 'Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive . . . Be it known, therefore, unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it'."

The Jews went off hastily, and had great consultations amongst themselves as to all that Paul had said. Alas!—some of the Jews had no wish for the world to be blessed. If Paul had argued that Jesus had come to save the Jewish race only, they would have been far better pleased. All of us are tempted to believe just what we want to believe; so now, even in the presence of this man who had proved by his sufferings how genuine he was, some could not make up their minds to believe, and they argued eagerly amongst themselves as to whether Paul could possibly be right.

We shall be glad that Luke was still near to Paul, to help him, for though Paul had expected that he would be brought to trial and be liberated, as there was no charge against him, he was neglected and allowed to remain a prisoner for two long years. He himself believed that, as he was allowed any visitors who cared to come, this gave him a great chance to preach about the message which he knew that Jesus had commissioned him to give.

There were many Christians in Rome at this time; and they believed that all too soon some dreadful persecution would be brought against them by the Emperor Nero.

Here Luke's story ends, and we should all like to know for certain what did happen to Paul. Some scholars think that, when

## ROME AT LAST

the two years were passed, Paul was brought up before Nero and sentenced to be killed by the sword. Others think that he was set free, and was able to do a little more travelling and preaching, that again he was arrested, condemned to a terrible imprisonment, and then martyred by the sword.

Perhaps we do not really need to know the exact truth, for whatever suffering came to Paul, he was ready for it.

In part of a letter to Timothy he writes, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing." For Paul could never think of Jesus as far away. He would come again.

In thinking of Paul at this time, we must think of Peter; yet here again there is nothing definite in the Bible as to what happened. It has always been considered in the church that Peter was also martyred, about the same time as Paul. But Peter was no Roman citizen, and he was crucified, as he expected to be.

We cannot leave Paul without explaining that it was not only his life, but his marvellous letters which have been so precious to Christians who have followed him, for nearly two thousand years; and before we quote from some of them, we will take a little incident which showed how Paul cared even for a poor slave.

## CHAPTER 7

### SLAVERY

**FROM** the days when Abraham and his people went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, we know that the keeping of slaves was the common custom. Slaves were taken in war, free men became slaves through debt or poverty, and when the word "servant" is used in the Bible it often means "slave." But the laws of the Israelites were far kinder to slaves than the laws of the heathen. For instance, if a slave escaped from his master, they were not to deliver him up.

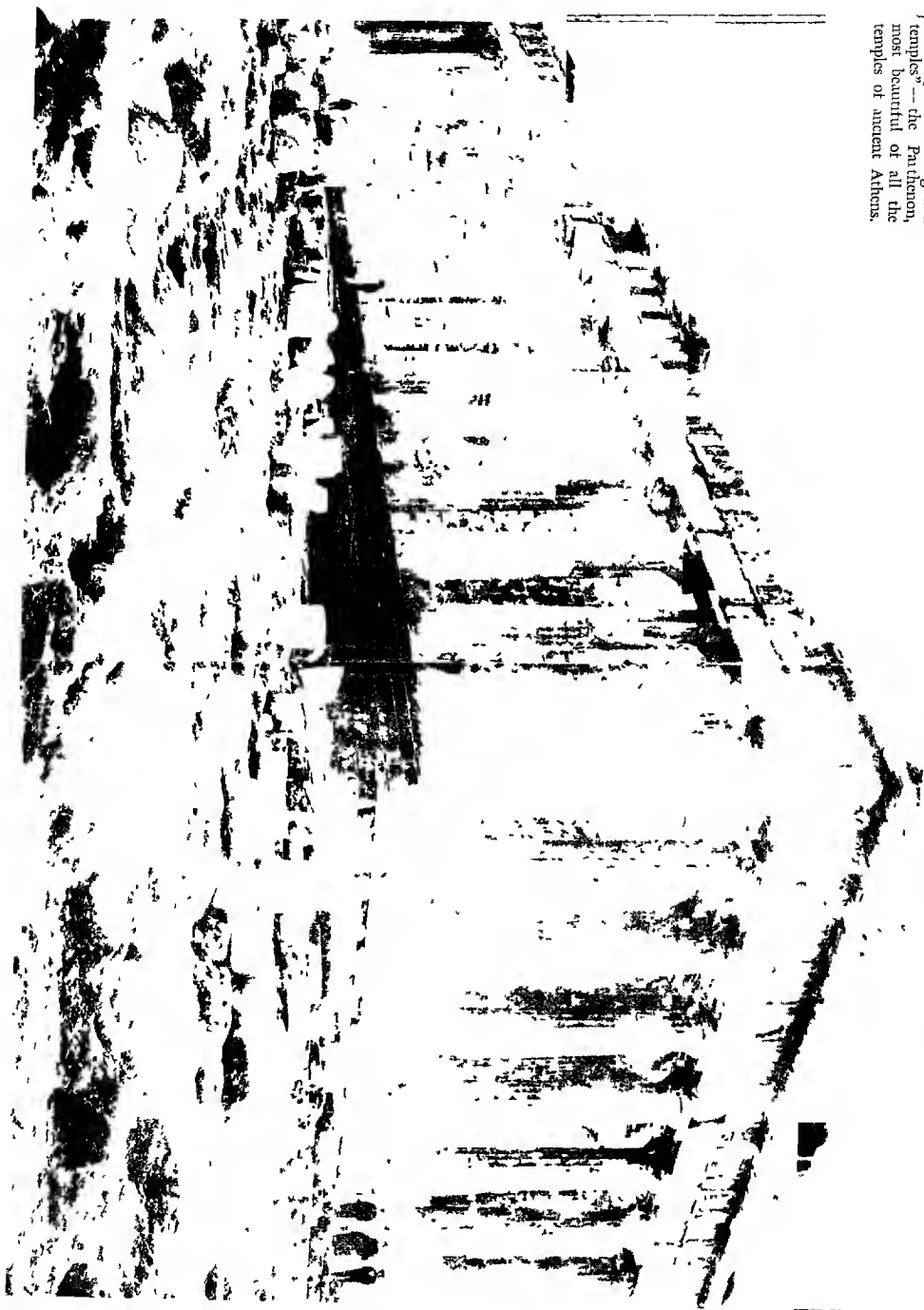
"He shall dwell with you where it is best. Thou shalt not oppress him."

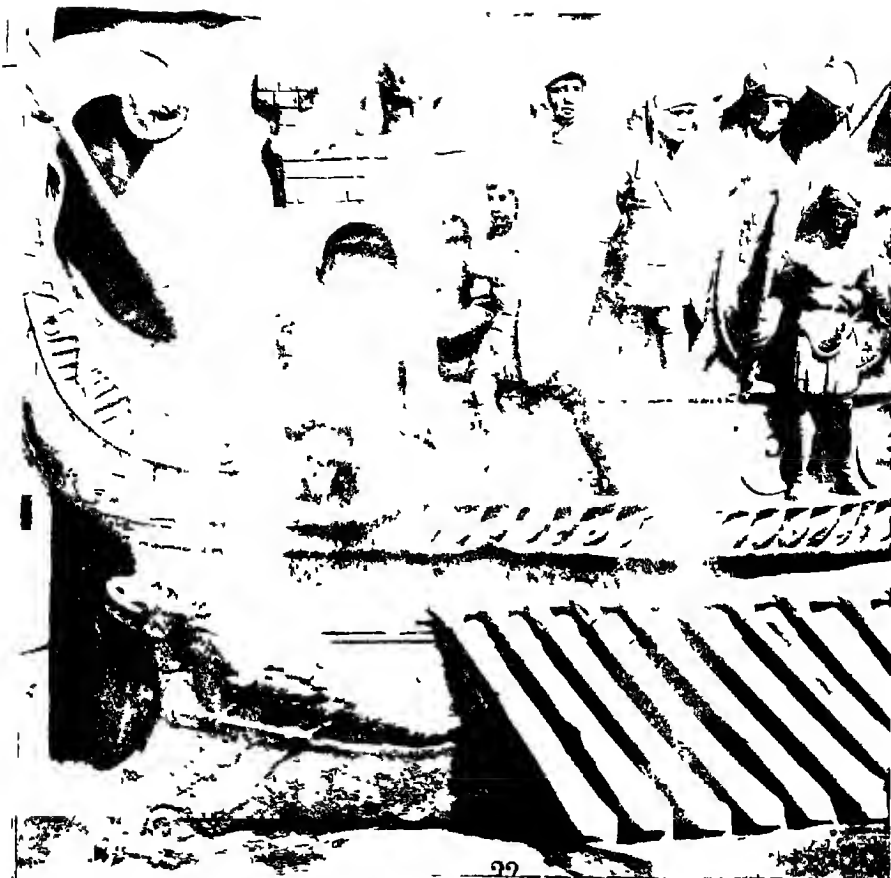




“Men, called gladiators, often slaves or prisoners or criminals, were set to murder one another in the arena.”

"The exquisite buildings and temples"—the Parthenon, most beautiful of all the temples of ancient Athens.





"A Roman centurion was taking a batch  
of Prisoners to Rome."

## SLAVERY

“Remember that thou wast a slave in Egypt,” said Jehovah.

If an Israelite had a slave, he was to release him after seven years of service, as we see by the following:

“If thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years, then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy threshing floor, and out of thy winepress; of that wherewith Jehovah thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him.”

Now, it happened that one day an escaped slave visited Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome. His name was Onesimus, and as Paul spoke of Jesus, Who had Himself become as a servant and died a slave's death, that He might prove that the Father loved men, women, and children, Onesimus' heart was touched, and he not only became a Christian, but devoted himself to help Paul in his imprisonment.

The Christians in these early times had not learnt that slavery was wrong, and it was hundreds of years before the church began to see that if men are to love their neighbours as themselves, they cannot keep them in slavery.

When Onesimus confessed that he was a slave to a Christian named Philemon, both he and Paul felt that it was his duty to return to his master. Now, a recaptured slave often suffered severe torture, or even death by crucifixion, and masters had quite unbounded rights over their slaves. There were masses of slaves in Rome, so many, indeed, that they were a danger to the State, and their rebellions were put down with horrible cruelties.

So Paul wrote a letter to Philemon, for Onesimus to take when he returned to his master, and we shall notice how beautifully Paul puts the case.

“Paul, a Prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon, our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer. . . . Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers. . . .

“I, Paul, the aged, and also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, beseech thee for my son Onesimus.”

## SLAVERY

Paul calls the escaped slave his son, and goes on to explain that he would have liked to have kept him with him, to help him in his imprisonment, but that he felt he ought to send him back to his master, to ask leave.

He begs Philemon to receive Onesimus, not only as a slave but as a brother beloved, and indeed, to count Onesimus as though he were Paul himself.

"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on my account. I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand; I will repay it; though . . . thou owest unto me thine own self besides. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say. But prepare me also a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you."

This last sentence makes us wonder whether Paul was not perhaps liberated for a little while, as he evidently expected to be.

## CHAPTER 8

### SCRAPS FROM PAUL'S LETTERS

#### TO THE ROMANS:

"If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

"As it is written, 'For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter?' Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## SCRAPS FROM PAUL'S LETTERS

"Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love.

"Bless them which persecute you. Bless and curse not.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written: 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord.

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

### TO THE CORINTHIANS:

"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

"We are labourers together with God.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of Angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. . . . Love suffereth long, and is kind. Love envieth not . . . is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil. . . . And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. . . .

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake.

"For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, it is He Who hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. . . .

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed . . . persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed . . . for our light

## SCRAPS FROM PAUL'S LETTERS

affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are for time only, but the things that are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly tent were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one." (Forty stripes was the legal number, and the Jews always gave one less, in case they had made a mistake in the counting). "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings, often in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness . . . in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, besides . . . that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

TO THE EPHESIANS and other Churches:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. . . . Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the gospel of peace. Take the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer."

TO THE PHILIPPIANS:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. . . . Who made himself of no reputation and took upon Him the

## SCRAPS FROM PAUL'S LETTERS

form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

TO THE COLOSSIANS:

"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto

TO THE THESSALONIANS:

"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all

## CHAPTER 9

### SCRAPS FROM THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

THERE were several Johns, as we know, and no one is absolutely sure which John wrote this "Epistle," but here it is in our Bible, and we shall like to read something of what the writer had to say:

"Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, 'I know Him!' and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. He that saith he abideth in Jesus Christ, ought also to walk, even as He walked.

"A new commandment I write unto you; which thing is true . . . because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother, dwelleth in the light.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.



## SCRAPS FROM THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

"My little children, let us not love in word, but in deed and in truth.

"We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man say 'I love God' and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, 'That he who loveth God, love his brother also.'"

## CHAPTER 10

### THE END OF OUR JOURNEY

ANY one who has climbed even a small mountain will know that time after time, the climber thinks he has reached the top, and then discovers that there are other peaks beyond him. So it is with this journey of ours Through the Bible.

In the beginning we took God as our Hero, and perhaps we hoped that at the end we should find the City of God. But now that we have come to a full stop, we know that God is still our Hero, that He had become more and more to us like Jesus, but that though the City of God is being built, it is still very far from being completed. The followers of Jesus Christ still climb, and still, like Abraham, look "for a City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"

There is a strange book at the end of the Bible, through which we shall not travel, as it is difficult to understand, and no one really knows all that it means. But there is a picture in it which we shall enjoy, as a parable.

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there

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shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away."

We cannot pretend to understand all that this means, but we are quite sure that the time is coming when wickedness and disobedience to the Father in heaven will pass away. His will will one day be done, and not until then can men, women and children be completely happy.

And now, let us see how far we have gone along this road to the Holy City, when the Bible comes to an end.

At the hour when Jesus was born, we reached the very centre of all history. Men now count the years from B.C.—that is "Before Christ"—and the years A.D., the years after Christ, or Anno Domini, "the year of our Lord."

Abraham lived about 2000 B.C., and we live in the 20th century A.D.

Jesus was not actually born, according to historians, Anno Domini 1, but possibly 5 to 7 B.C. The exact date does not matter, so long as we know that about that time the Son of the Father came down to earth to give life to the world.

It was about A.D. 29, that is when Jesus was 34 years old, that His own nation, with whom we have travelled all the way along from Abraham, refused to let Him reign over them. They despised and rejected Him, and persuaded the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, to condemn Him to death.

There is no fact in all history greater than the fact that Jesus died, except the fact that He rose again. Jesus could not and did not fail. It was man who failed, but just as Jesus cried "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!" so He still calls to men, women, and children that He is the Way and the Truth and the Life.

The big lesson to learn from our Journey is the lesson of the loving-kindness and eternal patience of God with man. God is like the Father whose boy ran away from home, like the Shepherd who searched for his lost sheep, and the Son of God called Himself the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.

So, as we have seen, as soon as the disciples knew that Jesus had risen, they became changed men. They forgot their fears and turned into brave missionaries, careless of what happened to themselves, and they spread the good news far and wide.

It is amazing to know that within about thirty years the

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Christian message spread so enormously, in spite of the fact that the early Christians were for the most part poor, many quite uneducated, and some even slaves. But as soon as a man or woman became a Christian, he or she felt it a duty to carry forward the news, as if indeed they had joined in some relay race.

There was a great deal of travelling in those days, for the Romans were famous for their road-making, and many of the Jewish Christians would be traders who could carry their goods and tell the news at the same time. Amongst both Jews and Gentiles there were many who were sick to death of the wickedness and cruelty and unkindness which they saw going on around them, and they were glad to know that there was a Father in Heaven who loved and cared for them, and had sent His own Son to earth to save them.

If these early Christians had not been fearless as to what the world did to them, as Jesus was fearless, there would have been a very different story to tell. As we know, Stephen, James, and James, the Lord's brother, were slain. Silas is thought to have been thrown to the lions in the arena. Peter was probably crucified, Paul was probably executed, and innumerable Christians suffered and perished during the next few generations. They stuck to it nobly and believed in the words of Paul: "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me," and nothing else mattered.

Life in the Roman world was, about this time, looking very black indeed. Nero, the Emperor, was cruel and merciless, the Romans had lost faith in their gods, and were bent upon luxury and pleasure at any cost. The Emperor was set on high as a god whom men must worship by offering incense.

We have all heard of the great games in Rome, when men, called gladiators, often slaves or prisoners or criminals, were set to murder one another in the arena, just for the fun and pleasure of the crowds who watched. There were great chariot races—a fine enough spectacle, if no one cared about the cruelty to horses and charioteers—and wild beasts were brought from great distances to fight one another to the bitter end. The Romans, both rich and poor, were in a dangerous mood, and the Emperors did all they could to keep them contented by offering them these cruel games.

It was just as we are approaching the end of our Journey that

## THE END OF OUR JOURNEY

the terrible tragedy happened in Rome which brought such agony and torture to the Christians. Nero, a reckless young man, is supposed to have set Rome alight, for the delight of seeing it burn, or more probably because he wanted to clear the ground for new buildings. However that may be, the City flamed, and fury rose against Nero from rich and poor who had lost their homes.

So it happened that Nero accused the Christians of having been guilty of firing Rome. Instantly the Christians were seized, tortured and crucified, and it is said that Nero gloated over their agonies. But the Emperor went too far, and the public pitied the Christians and hated Nero more than ever. By A.D. 67 he was dead by his own hand.

Before closing our book, we must take one peep forward for three years, for we have learnt to know Jerusalem as though it were our own city. We remember how the Zealots who wanted to make Jesus into a king by force, and fight the Romans to win Him His kingdom, had been disappointed.

Jesus had said, "My Kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight." His Kingdom was in the hearts of men.

But the Zealots and other Jews had never given up the idea of freeing themselves from Roman rule. They were now the only nation bent on such rebellion.

For years they had been working up for this last great struggle, and in A.D. 70 it ended.

After a terrible siege, in the reign of the Emperor Titus, the Romans entered the City, and we will let Josephus tell us how the once glorious Temple was destroyed:

"Then a certain soldier took a flaming firebrand, and cast it into the golden gate, which entered into the rooms on the north part of the Temple.

"News was brought to Titus, and he rushed into the Temple to hinder the fire, taking his captains with him. With voice and hand he tried to signal to the soldiers, but they could not be restrained either by command or threatenings, but every one went where fury carried him, and thronging together at the entrance many pressed one another to death, and many amongst the flaming ruins of the galleries perished.

"When they came to the Temple itself, they pretended not to

## THE END OF OUR JOURNEY

hear Titus, and the Caesar could not restrain the fury of the mad-brained soldiers, and the fire increased.

"So Titus entered into the Temple with his nobles, and saw all the Holy things, far surpassing any description and report that had been given of them.

"The flames, not having passed into the inner part of the Temple, nor yet consumed the houses and rooms about it, Titus thought it might even yet be preserved. Therefore he came forward and entreated the soldiers to extinguish the fire, and commanded the Centurion of his guard to beat back the soldiers with his truncheon. But their fury and rage of war, and the hatred they bore against the Jews, overcame all fear of commands. Many hoped for booty, thinking that all the Temple was full of money.

"Then a certain soldier fired the posts above the doors, and when Titus saw the flames within he went away.

"It was now hopeless, and every one stood looking on without trying to extinguish the flames.

"Thus the Temple was burnt down against the will of Titus."

Did old men in that crowd remember the warning that Jesus had given?:

"Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life!" He had cried pleadingly. But Jesus never forced any one to follow Him, against His will.

The Jews were scattered, and lost their country; but the persecuted Christians held on their way. The Roman Empire fell in time, and the worship of the gods came to an end. To-day, the Kingdom of God still grows, and the Father works in the hearts of men, women, and children, and for long centuries Christians have followed Christians, seeking to build up a true City of God.

